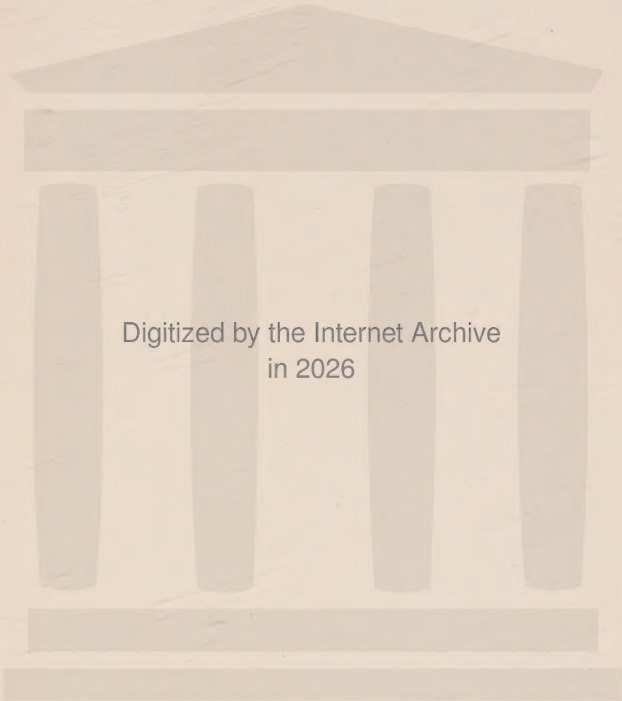
DEAN DUNHAM

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

219

William Eberhardt,
from
Aunt Catherine,
Xmas 1907.

DEAN DUNHAM


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/deandunhamorwate0000hora_j5y2

DEAN FINDS A CLEW.

DEAN DUNHAM

OR

The Waterford Mystery

BY

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

AUTHOR OF

"THE YOUNG ACROBAT," "THE ERIE TRAIN BOY,"
"ADVENTURES OF A TELEGRAPH BOY," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA

DAVID McKAY, PUBLISHER

610 SOUTH WASHINGTON SQUARE

Copyright, 1888
By Frank A. Munsey
Copyright, 1891
By United States Book Co.
Copyright, 1900
By Street and Smith

Dean Dunham

DEAN DUNHAM;

OR,

THE WATERFORD MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

ADIN DUNHAM SURPRISES HIS WIFE.

"I've been looking forward to this day for weeks, Sarah," said Adin Dunham, as he rose from the breakfast-table on a certain Wednesday morning in the early part of June.

"Why, father, what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Dunham curiously.

"Because to-day I am to receive a thousand dollars—a thousand dollars in hard cash," answered her husband in a tone of exultation.

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated his wife in amazement. "Who on earth is going to give you a thousand dollars?"

"No one is going to give it to me; it's my own."

"How strangely you do talk, Adin Dunham! You ain't out of your mind, be you?"

"Not as I know of," answered her husband with an amused smile.

"Is it really true that somebody is going to pay you a thousand dollars?"

"Yes, it is."

"And you say it is your own?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand it," said Mrs. Dunham, with the air of one to whom a puzzle is propounded and who gives it up.

"Then I'll explain. You know when Uncle Dan died he left me a piece of stony pasture land in Rockmount?"

"Yes, I know. You never could sell it, I've heard you say ag'in and ag'in."

"Well, I've sold it at last. There's a company goin' to put up a big hotel just on that spot, and they've offered me a thousand dollars for the land."

"Couldn't they find a better buildin' lot than tha?"

"Well, you see it's located near the lake, and though it's barren enough it's well situated, and there's five acres of it, plenty of room for all the buildin's required. They offered me first seven hundred, then eight hundred, and finally when they got up to a thousand I caved in——"

"You what?"

"Well, I agreed to let 'em have it. I'm going over to-day to get the money."

"Why, it'll make us rich, Adin. I never expected you'd be wuth a thousand dollars."

"I wonder what Uncle Dan would have said if he'd

thought I would have got so much for the land. He never cared much for me, and he only left me that because he thought it wasn't wuth anything. He did better by me than he expected."

"What are you going to do with the money, Adin?"

"I don't know yet. I'll keep it by me till I've decided. Perhaps I'll invest in gov'ment bonds. I guess they're about as safe as anything."

"So I've heard, Adin. I suppose the gov'ment ain't likely to fail."

"If it is, I guess all the banks will fail too."

"How are you goin' over to Rockmount?"

"I'll borrow neighbor Gould's horse and buggy. That horse is pretty strong, and he won't mind the twenty miles—ten there and ten back."

"I don't like to have you travelin' so far with all that money. S'pose you should meet with robbers."

"There ain't any robbers round here, Sarah. This is a respectable community."

"You might meet a tramp."

"Well, the chances are that he'd be more afraid of me than I would be of him. I ain't a child, Sarah. I can lift a barrel of potatoes and put it in a wagon as easy as most men."

"Well, Adin, you know best. Hadn't you better take Dean with you?"

"Why should I take Dean?"

"It would be safer for two than for one."

"You don't mean to say that I need a boy of sixteen to protect me? If I thought I did, I'd stay at home and send Dean by himself."

"Well, Adin, I don't want to interfere. It wouldn't be much use, either, for you generally have your own way. Have you told any of the neighbors that you are goin' for some money?"

"No except Lawyer Bates."

"What made you tell him?"

"Well, I was in his office the other evenin', and somehow I was led into tellin' it. I gave a sort of hint, and the lawyer he drew it out of me. Them lawyers are great on cross-examinin', you know."

"What did Squire Bates say?"

"He told me I'd better not tell anybody else. He talked for all the world just like you did, Sarah. You haven't been chatterin' with the squire, have you?"

"No, Adin, I don't like him well enough for that. I never fancied the squire. He's always showin' those long front teeth of his, like a wild beast."

"They ain't very handsome teeth, I'm bound to admit, Sarah, but the poor man can't help himself. He's as God made him."

"He gave you good advice at any rate, Adin. There's so many dishonest people in the world that it's best to be careful. Did you tell him when you were goin' for the money?"

"I don't exactly remember. I guess I did."

"Do you think Squire Bates is a rich man, Adin?"

"I don't know. He's a lawyer, and keeps his affairs mighty close."

"That boy of his—Brandon—is his very image, even to the teeth."

"Well, he does favor his father considerable."

"Dean doesn't like him. He's a very big feeling boy. He looks down on Dean because he is the nephew of a poor man."

"O, he'll get wiser in time. We mustn't mind them young folks so much. Boys will be boys."

"So they will, but there's different kinds of boys."

"I guess there's room enough in the world for both of them. If they don't like each other they can keep apart."

"Dean is an excellent boy. I don't know how we should get along without him."

"I indorse all that, wife," said Adin Dunham heartily.

"He's always cheerful and willin'—always ready to do chores and give up his own pleasure. I remember last winter he'd set his heart on going with a skatin' party, but when I was taken sick, he stayed at home and tended me, without a word of complaint. He couldn't have done no more if he'd been a son instead of a nephew."

"Just so, wife! Just so! He's a likely boy, and if he keeps on as he's begun he's sure to do well."

"He deserves to prosper, and I hope he will. I wish we could do more for him."

"So do I, but a carpenter that gets work only about half the time can't do what he'd like to."

Just then Dean came into the house—a broad-shouldered, strongly built boy, with a frank, open countenance and red cheeks.

"Dean," said his uncle, "won't you go over to neighbor Gould, and ask if he will lend his horse and

buggy for the day? I'm goin' over to Rockmount."

"Going to Rockmount?" repeated Dean eagerly. "Will you take me, uncle?"

"Not to-day, Dean. It's a long ride, and it'll be easier on the horse to carry one than two."

Dean looked disappointed. A ride to Rockmount, which was a considerably larger place than Waterford, would have been to him a very agreeable recreation, but he was not a boy to complain or tease when a favor had been refused. So he indulged in no remonstrance, but went over to Mr. Gould's dwelling, only twenty rods away, and preferred the request.

"Certainly," said Mr. Gould pleasantly. "So your uncle has business in Rockmount, has he?"

"Yes sir, I suppose so, but he didn't tell me what it is."

"Well, tell him not to over drive the Captain." (This was the rather peculiar name of M. Gould's horse.)

"I don't think there's any danger," said Dean smiling, for he knew that Adin Dunham was one of the most deliberate of men, and permitted a horse to select his own pace.

CHAPTER II.

SQUIRE RENWICK BATES.

ADIN DUNHAM got into the buggy, took the reins from Dean, and drove away.

The pretentious house of Squire Bates stood a little way back from the road a quarter of a mile further on. The lawyer stood in front of his gate. He smiled as Adin Dunham drove by.

"Well, Dunham," he said, "so you are on your way to Rockmount?"

"Yes, squire."

"And bound on a pleasant errand, too," continued Bates, with a second smile.

"Yes, squire. I can't believe it hardly. It's a new experience for me. I never thought I should be worth a thousand dollars."

"Yes, it's quite a sum. What do you propose to do with it?"

"I may pay up the mortgage on my place."

"But suppose I don't want to receive it?"

"But why wouldn't you want to receive it?"

"Oh, it's paying me fairish interest, and I should have to look up another investment."

"But you could do that better than I."

"Come and see me when you get back, and I'll

give you advice. I wouldn't trouble myself for every one, but you are a friend and neighbor," said Squire Bates, smiling and showing the long white tusks that gave him so peculiar an appearance.

"Your advice ought to be good, squire. You are used to investin' money.

"Yes, I have a good deal to invest," said Bates. "Which way shall you return?" asked the squire carelessly.

"I thought I might take the creek road, squire."

"If it were my case, I would come through the woods. It's half a mile shorter."

"That's so, and I did think of it, but you and my wife talked to me about robbers, till I began to think the creek road would be safer."

Squire Bates laughed in an amused way.

"I rather think your wife and I talked like old women," he said. "It seems rather ridiculous to think of robbers in this neighborhood."

"So it does!" said Adin Dunham eagerly. "I told Sarah so.

"Then you'll come through the woods?"

"Yes."

"About what time?"

"Oh, I shan't stay very long after my business is done."

"You'll probably pass through about three o'clock?"

"Well, say four. I've got a cousin in Rockmount that I shall take dinner with, and that'll take up part of my time. Then I've got one or two errands to do

at the stores there. I'm to buy my wife a pair of shoes at Ingals's store. He knows just what she wants, and always fits her."

"There's one thing I would advise you not to do, neighbor Dunham."

"What is that?"

"Don't invite any one to ride home with you."

"Why not?"

"Well, you'll have considerable money with you and it might prove a temptation even to a respectable man. You see to most people it is a large sum—not to me, for I am better off than the average, but I've read in my law books of a good many crimes that were the result of a sudden impulse. There's no reason to be nervous, but it's well to be prudent, neighbor."

"That's good sense, squire. Thank you for your caution. Well, I must be getting on."

"Good luck to you," said Bates, as he turned and went into the house.

Squire Bates had been for three years a resident of Waterford. He appeared to have plenty of money, though it was a mystery where it came from. He professed to be a lawyer, and had an office, but beyond writing a will or a lease, or some such matter, had no practice to speak of. This, however, did not seem to trouble him. It was a popular belief that the care of his property gave him considerable to do. He had no investments in Waterford except the house he lived in, and a mortgage on the house and small landed property of Adin Dunham. The as-

sessors got very little satisfaction out of him when they questioned him about his taxable property.

"I am taxed elsewhere," he said briefly.

"But you have some personal property?"

"Oh well, you may put me down for a thousand dollars."

"It is generally supposed that you have a much larger personal property than that."

"I have, gentleman," answered Bates frankly, "but you know that government bonds are not taxable."

That explained it. The board of assessors jumped to the conclusion that Squire Bates had a large sum in government bonds, and did not pursue their inquiries further.

There was one thing that puzzled Waterford people about the lawyer. He often absented himself in a mysterious way, sometimes for weeks at a time. He never told where he went, nor did his wife and son when questioned appear to know. At any rate they never gave any information. He would reappear as suddenly as he had disappeared, and always explain briefly that he had been away on business. What the nature of the business was he did not state, a sensible thing probably, but his reticence excited considerable remark among his fellow-townsmen, who did not approve of it.

When Squire Bates re-entered the house he went up to his room—his library was on the second floor—and locked the door. He sat down in a rocking-chair, and seemed plunged in thought.

"A thousand dollars!" he soliloquized. "It is a good sum of money. It would be a great lift to Adin Dunham. It would enable him to pay off the mortgage on his place, and that would not suit me. I prefer to foreclose by and by. Upon the whole the money will be better in my hands than in his. It was well I suggested to him not to come home by the creek road. That is too open, and would not suit my plans."

Lawyer Bates rose, and, taking a key from his pocket, opened the door of a small closet. It was a clothes closet evidently, but its contents were of a curious character. There was one suit that a fastidious tramp would have scorned to wear. There were several masks. There were disguises of different kinds, three wigs, one red, and false beards. Of what earthly use could these articles be to a respectable country lawyer?

Not even Mrs. Bates had seen the inside of this closet. Once she suggested cleaning it, but the curt refusal with which her proposal was received prevented her making it again.

"I keep my papers in there," said her husband, "and I am not willing that they should be disturbed."

"I would be very careful, Renwick," said Mrs. Bates. "I would attend to it myself."

"You will offend me if you say more, Mrs. Bates," said her husband, looking displeased, and she took the hint.

Mrs. Bates was a pleasant, gentle woman who did

not put on airs, and she was much more popular in the village than her husband, whose face had a singularly disagreeable expression, especially when he smiled, for then he showed his long white teeth, which, as Mrs. Dunham expressed it, were like the fangs of a wild beast.

His son Brandon was like his father, even to the teeth. He was a boy of cruel instincts, haughty and imperious, and disposed to lord it over his schoolmates and companions. He was heartily tired of Waterford, and had more than once suggested to his father that it would be wise to leave it.

"When I want your advice, Brandon, I will ask for it," said Squire Bates briefly.

Brandon did not press the matter. He knew his father too well, but he complained to his mother.

"What on earth can father be thinking of to stay in such a quiet hole as Waterford?"

"It is a pleasant village, Brandon," said his mother gently.

"What is there pleasant about it?"

"The people are pleasant."

"I have no fit associates."

"There is Dean Dunham, who is about your age."

"I *hate* him!" said Brandon passionately.

"Why do you hate him, my son? Mrs. Dunham tells me he is a great comfort to her."

"I don't know anything about that. He is very impudent to me. He seems to think he is my equal."

"I am afraid you are too proud, Brandon."

"Isn't father the richest man in Waterford, I'd like to know? Dean Dunham is the nephew of a poor carpenter, who keeps him out of charity."

"Ah, Brandon, you shouldn't value people for their money."

"Dean Dunham is no fit companion for me. If I were in the city, I should find plenty of associates."

Gentle Mrs Bates sighed. She could not approve of her son's pride.

CHAPTER III.

BRANDON'S JOKE.

About quarter of a mile from the village was a pond of small size, not over a third of a mile across, but it provided the boys of the village a great deal of amusement. In the summer it afforded chances for bathing and boating, in the winter for skating.

Among the boys who had boats on the pond were Dean Dunham and Brandon Bates, but there was a considerable difference between them. Dean's was an old flat-bottomed boat, which he had bought for a dollar from a man who had used it for half a dozen years, while Brandon's was spick and span new, a very handsome craft, and by all odds the finest on the pond.

Brandon was not, however, the best rower, though he considered himself such. That distinction belonged to Dean, whose arms were strengthened by labor, and whose constant practice gave him unusual skill.

Directly in the middle of the pond was a small island, not over half an acre in extent, which naturally enough was often visited by the boys of Waterford.

On the day of Adin Dunham's journey to Rockmount, Brandon, having nothing else to do, for there was a vacation in the village school, sauntered down to the place where he kept his boat. He had had a small boat-house constructed, where he kept his boat under cover. It had been built by Adin Dunham, the village carpenter, and excited the admiration of the other village boys, who did not aspire to such a luxury.

"Why don't you get your uncle to build you a boat-house, Dean?" asked Brandon, satirically.

Dean laughed good-naturedly.

"My old boat isn't likely to be injured by exposure to the weather," he answered.

"That's true. How would you like to have a boat like mine?"

"I should be delighted; so if you are thinking of giving me one, I hope you will go ahead and do it."

Brandon shrugged his shoulders.

"It is too expensive for a working boy," he said.

"I know of one working boy who would appreciate it. I suppose *you* don't call yourself a working boy."

"I am a gentleman's son," said Brandon, haughtily.

"And gentlemen's sons don't work, I presume."

"They don't work for a living."

"There are different ways of working; working with the brains, for instance."

"Of course I do that."

"And I, too."

"I don't approve of a superior education for the lower classes," remarked Brandon.

"Whom do you mean by the lower classes?" asked Dean, his face flushing.

"Oh, working boys and working men, and so on."

"Some of our most successful men used to be working boys."

"A few," Brandon admitted reluctantly.

"I mean to become one of those few."

Brandon laughed sarcastically.

"You'd better be contented with your station in life," he said.

"Thank you for the advice, but I shan't follow it."

"It won't make much difference, I fancy."

This conversation took place three months before, soon after Brandon's boat-house was completed.

When on this June day Brandon loosened his rope, and prepared for a row, he was alone. But just as he was pushing off he caught sight of a small boy, ten years old, the son of a poor Irish widow in the village, who regarded him and his boat wistfully.

"Give me a ride, Brandon?" he asked.

Ordinarily Brandon would have answered in the negative, and indeed he was on the point of doing so, when a sudden idea entered his mind.

"Well, jump in, you little brat!" he said.

Tommy Boyle was only too glad to do so, and he did not trouble himself to resent the rough form of invitation.

"Thank you, Brandon," he said.

"Look here, youngster, don't call me Brandon."

"Why, isn't that your name?" asked Tommy, in wonder.

"It is not respectful. You must call me Mr. Bates."

"But Mr. Bates is your father," objected Tommy.

"That is my name, too. My father is Squire Bates."

Tommy did not pay much attention to this explanation, for he was paddling his hands in the water.

"Lemme row," said Tommy, suddenly.

"Let you row? You can't row."

"Yes I can. Dean lets me row."

"It doesn't make much difference about his old tub," said Brandon, scornfully; "you can't row in this boat."

"Why not, Brandon?"

"Didn't I tell you not to call me Brandon?"

"Mr. Bates, then."

"Perhaps I'll let you row when we come back. Did you ever go to the island?"

"Yes, Dean took me there one day."

"We are going there now."

"Are we? Cricky, ain't that fun!"

Brandon smiled unpleasantly, showing his teeth after his father's fashion.

"He'll be singing a different tune before long," he said to himself.

"When I'm a big boy I'm going to have a boat, too," said Tommy.

"Perhaps Dean will sell you his, then," suggested Brandon, amused.

"He says he'll give it to me."

"It'll be a splendid craft, then. Is he going to do without one?"

"He says he'll have a boat some time that'll beat yours, Brandon—I mean Mr. Bates."

"Oh, he says that, does he?" asked Brandon, showing his teeth again, but in a less good-natured manner. "I should like to know where he's going to get it from. Do you know how much this boat cost?"

"No."

"It cost fifty dollars," said Brandon, in an important tone.

"Is that a good deal of money?"

"I should say it was. It'll be years before Dean Dunham sees as much money as that."

"Dean is a nice boy!" said Tommy, surmising that his favorite was spoken of slightingly.

"Oh, he's well enough in his place, but he's a poor working boy.

"My mother says he's awful good to work," asserted Tommy.

"Well, that's what he's made for. But here we are at the island. Wouldn't you like to land, Tommy?"

"Oh, yes—Mr. Bates."

"All right, then! Jump out."

Tommy jumped out, and scrambled up the bank. Then he turned round, expecting Brandon to follow.

But Brandon instead pushed off from shore till his boat rode twenty feet away. Then he turned a laughing face towards his young passenger.

"Ain't you comin' too, Brandon?" asked the little boy, in surprise.

"What did I tell you?"

"Mr. Bates."

"No, I'm going back."

"Wait for me."

"No, I'm going to leave you here a little while. You'll have fine sport," and Brandon burst into a fit of laughter.

"Oh, take me off!" exclaimed Tommy, in dire alarm. "I don't want to stay here."

"You'll be like Robinson Crusoe. You'll have a fine time."

"I don't know Crusoe—I want to go home."

"It's the best joke I ever heard of," said Brandon, laughing heartily. "You will be king of the island, Tommy—King Tommy the First."

But Tommy did not enjoy the joke. He begged and entreated Brandon to take him away, but the hard-hearted boy, by way of answer, impelled his boat vigorously, and poor Tommy, sitting down on the bank, and digging his fists into his tear-stained eyes, felt that he was without a friend in the world.

"How the little chap roars!" said Brandon, turning with a smile to watch the forlorn cast-away.

It did not take him long to reach the boat-house, where he coolly proceeded to put up his boat. He

was just hauling it on shore when Dean Dunham made his appearance.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked.

Brandon pointed over to the island, where poor Tommy was still mourning his captivity.

"Look there!" he said.

CHAPTER IV.

TOMMY BOYLE IS RESCUED.

"WHO is that?" asked Dean, quickly.

"It is Tommy Boyle."

"How did he get there?"

"I carried him in my boat."

"And left him there?"

"Yes," answered Brandon, with an amused laugh.

"Didn't he want to come back?"

"Of course he did. He's awfully frightened to be left there alone. I told him he would make a good Robinson Crusoe, but the little beggar never heard of him."

"Why did you do such a mean thing, Brandon Bates?" demanded Dean.

"That's my business, Dean Dunham," answered Brandon, in an offended tone.

"Then I'll make it my business," said Dean, sternly. "Get right into your boat and go after Tommy."

"Why, you impudent beggar!" exclaimed Brandon, almost foaming at the mouth with rage, "how dare you say that to me?"

"There's no courage needed," said Dean, dryly. "Are you going to do as I ask you?"

"No, I'm not," said Brandon, shortly. "Be off with you, if you know what's best for yourself, or I may take it into my head to thrash you."

"I am ready—any time, except now. I have something else to do."

Brandon Bates was standing with the boat rope in his hands, preparing to draw it into the boat-house. He was by no means prepared for what was coming. Dean with a quick movement snatched the rope from him, jumped into the boat, seized the oars, and before the owner had recovered from his astonishment, was two lengths away, rowing in the direction of the island.

"Come back here, you rascal!" exclaimed Brandon, almost purple with rage, and stamping in his fury.

"I have no time," answered Dean, coolly.

"What do you mean by stealing my boat?"

"Your boat is safe, I have only borrowed it."

"I never saw such impudence! I will have you arrested!"

"Do so if you want to. I am going to rescue the poor little fellow you have left on the island."

"Then take your own boat."

"Tommy went over on your boat, and he's going back on the same."

Brandon called out again, but Dean was now too far away to hear him.

The temper of Brandon Bates was not the sweetest, but it is doubtful whether he had ever been more angry than at the present moment. He felt that his

dignity had been outraged, and himself insulted, and that, too, by a working boy.

"I'd like to shoot him!" he vociferated, shaking his fist in impotent rage at the rapidly-receding boat.

Tommy meanwhile had seen what was going on, the distance being inconsiderable.

As soon as he saw that his situation was known to Dean, the little fellow's excitement and alarm subsided.

"Dean will come for me, and take me home," he said to himself.

When he saw Dean's bold seizure of the boat, he clapped his hands in joy.

"Dean's a good deal better boy than Brandon," he said. He rose from his place, and stood watching eagerly for the coming of his deliverer.

"Hallo, Tommy!" called out Dean, when he was within hearing distance.

"Hallo, Dean!"

"Were you very much frightened?"

"Yes; I thought I'd have to stay here all night."

Swiftly the boat sped through the water till it grazed the pebbly shore.

"Jump in, Tommy!"

Tommy needed no second bidding.

"Oh, Dean, I'm so glad you came for me."

"And I'm glad I saw you. What made Brandon play such a trick on you?"

"I don't know. When I begged him to take me back he only laughed."

"He doesn't look much like laughing now," said

Dean, smiling, as he saw Brandon still standing at the boat wharf, shaking his fist angrily.

"I hope he won't fight you, Dean," said Tommy, rather troubled.

"He may if he wants to. I think he will get the worst of it."

Meanwhile Brandon caught sight of the village constable, walking along the road a few rods from the shore of the pond.

He ran to the road and intercepted him.

"Mr. Pray," he said.

"Well, Brandon?"

"I want you to arrest Dean Dunham."

"What am I to arrest Dean Dunham for?" asked the constable in surprise.

"He took my coat from me by force, like an impudent young loafer as he is, and is out in the boat rowing."

"Yes, I see him. Tommy Boyle is with him. How does that happen?"

"He went over to the island and took him off."

"I don't understand. How came Tommy on the island?"

"I took him there."

"You took him there? Did he want to stay?"

"No, I left him there—as a joke."

"You left the poor little boy there to get off as he could!" said the constable, indignantly.

"It didn't do him any harm," said Brandon, sullenly. "There are no wild animals there that I ever heard," he added sarcastically.

"And Dean Dunham took your boat to go after him?"

"Yes, he did. He took it away from me without asking my permission."

"He did perfectly right. Would you have had him leave poor Tommy there?"

"Why didn't he take his own boat, then?" said Brandon in a sullen tone.

"Because he didn't want to leave Tommy there any longer than was necessary. He has only done what you ought to have done."

"He had no business to steal my boat. I want him arrested."

"I am more likely to arrest you for kidnapping the boy."

"You don't seem to know who I am, Mr. Pray," said Brandon angrily.

"Oh yes, I do. You are Brandon Bates, but you are not so important a person as you suppose."

"If I am not, my father is, and he'll have you turned out of your office."

He expected the constable to show dismay at this threat, but Mr. Pray, who was very independent, only laughed.

"All right," he answered. "I am glad you let me know what's going to happen. I'll see what else I can find to do. How soon do you think I shall lose my place?"

Brandon turned from the constable in disgust. Everybody seemed to be in a conspiracy to insult him.

Dean was now very near shore, and Brandon's attention was called elsewhere. The constable remained, a little curious to witness the interview between the two boys. Perhaps because he could not find words to express his feelings, Brandon did not say a word while Dean was landing his young passenger. As he jumped out himself he held out the rope to the angry owner.

"I have brought back your boat safe," he said.

"You'll pay for this, Dean Dunham," said Brandon, as he took the rope with a red face.

"Can I help you put the boat into the boat-house?" asked Dean calmly.

"I want none of your help. Never dare to touch my boat again!"

"Then don't play any more such dirty tricks on my friend Tommy! Tommy, I wouldn't advise you to go out rowing with Brandon again."

"I won't," said Tommy, fervently.

"You won't get a chance, you dirty little brat!" snarled Brandon.

"Come away, Tommy. When you want a boat ride come to me. I'll give you a ride any time."

"It's a great privilege riding in your old scow," sneered Brandon.

"I don't think much of the boat myself," said Dean, smiling. "I've seen those I liked better."

Dean went home, and attended to various chores. About four o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Dunham began to look for her husband.

"It's time your Uncle Adin was at home," she

said. "I suppose his business kept him longer than he expected."

Just then Mr. Gould entered the yard. He looked excited and anxious.

"Dean," he said, "something's happened to your uncle. My horse just ran into my yard with the empty buggy."

Dean turned pale.

"What shall we do," he asked.

"Come with me. We'll go back over the road, and see if we can find him. Not a word to your aunt! We don't want to make her anxious.

CHAPTER V.

ADIN DUNHAM RECEIVES HIS MONEY.

ADIN DUNHAM'S ride to Rockmount had been uneventful. He went at once to the real estate office of Thomas Marks, the agent through whom the sale had been effected. When he entered the office it was with a light step and a joyful look, for it was on a very agreeable errand he had come.

Mr. Marks was seated at his desk, and looked up as Dunham entered.

"I thought you wouldn't fail to come, Mr. Dunham," he said with a smile. "If it were to pay money, there might have been some question of it, but a man doesn't generally miss an appointment to receive a payment of a thousand dollars."

"That's so, Mr. Marks, I've been looking forward to this day."

"I've no doubt of it. I suppose such occasions are rare with you."

"This is the first time I was ever lucky enough to receive a large sum of money. I can hardly believe I am so rich. You, see, Mr. Marks, I am a poor man, and always have been. I inherited the place where I live from my father, but no money to speak of.

"Is the place clear?"

"No; it is mortgaged for eight hundred dollars."

"Who holds the mortgage?"

"Squire Bates, of our village."

"I know him. He is the man with very prominent teeth."

"Yes."

"Is he a rich man?"

"We all think so, but he keeps his affairs very close."

"Don't the assessors know?"

"He says most of his property is in government bonds, and these are not taxable, you know."

"To be sure."

"I don't know how it is," said the agent, thoughtfully, "but I don't like that man."

"He is always obligin' enough to me. Last time I made him wait a week for the interest, but he did not complain."

"I suppose he felt sure of getting it. How much interest do you pay?"

"Seven per cent."

"You ought only to pay six. You will find it hard to get more than that for your money. Shall you pay the mortgage with the money I am to pay you?"

"I did think of it, but the squire doesn't seem to care for me to do it. He says he can find a good investment for me."

"At what price do you value your house and land?"

"I don't suppose I could get over two thousand dollars for it."

"That would leave you twelve hundred after the mortgage is paid.

"Yes. If I pay it off with this thousand, there would be two hundred dollars left over."

"Exactly."

"To tell the truth, I think myself in great good luck to get so much for my land here. When Uncle Dan left it to me I didn't suppose it was worth over two hundred dollars altogether, and I don't believe I could have got any more. You see it is very poor land to cultivate."

"True enough, but the site was commanding. For the hotel company it is a good purchase."

"I suppose it is, but nobody thought of a hotel being built at the time I inherited the land from my uncle. Probably he thought it worth little or nothing, for he didn't like me overmuch, and didn't care to do much for me."

"Then it is better for you that he couldn't foresee the prospective value of his bequest. It might have led to an alteration in his will."

"No doubt it would. When are the hotel folks goin' to build?"

"They have got the cellar dug and the frame up already. Didn't you know that?"

"No; I haven't been up that way."

"Better go by it on your return. They would like to have had it ready for occupation this season, but they have begun too late for that. I understand

that it may be thrown open for fall boarders if it should be completed by the middle of August."

"What would Uncle Dan say if he were alive to see it?"

"It would make the old man open his eyes, beyond a doubt. Now, Mr. Dunham, how will you receive this money? Shall I give you a check?"

"No; I shouldn't know what to do with a check. I never received a check in my life," said Adin Dunham, shaking his head.

All bank matters were unknown to the carpenter, except that he had once a small deposit in a savings bank, but he never could get rid of the fear that the bank would break, and he finally drew it out to get his mind at rest.

"A check would be safer, I think," said the agent.

"How can it be safer? The bank might break before I got the money."

Thomas Marks smiled.

"From what I know of the bank this is hardly likely, I think," he made answer. However, I don't presume to advise. I mean that if you should lose the check, or have it stolen, it would not be a serious loss."

"Why not?"

"Because it will be made payable to your order, and unless indorsed by you, that is, with your signature written on the back, it would do the finder, or thief, no good."

"I don't mean to lose it, and I am not likely to

meet any robbers, though my wife and Squire Bates told me I must be careful."

"Squire Bates told you that, did he?"

"Yes."

"He knows, then, that you are to receive this money to-day?"

"Yes; I told him."

"Did you tell any one else?"

"No."

"That is well. It is always best to be cautious in such cases; though I can hardly imagine, myself, that there could be any highway robbers in a quiet farming town like Waterford."

"Just what I told my wife, Mr. Marks."

"Then you will take the money in bills?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

The agent went to a safe on the opposite side of the room, and opened it.

"That's a queer sort of a cupboard, Mr. Marks," said Adin Dunham.

The agent smiled.

"Yes," he answered. "If you are going to keep the money in your house, you may have to buy one."

"How much does it cost?"

"I gave a hundred and twenty-five dollars for this," he said.

Adin Dunham whistled. He had not supposed it would cost over fifteen.

"I shan't buy one," he said.

"You had better not. You will soon be investing

the money, no doubt, so that there will be no occasion. I would pay off the mortgage if I were you."

"It wouldn't seem as if I had the money at all if I did that. Besides, the squire says he will find an investment for me."

"Meanwhile I hope you won't be as foolish as a man I was reading of the other day, living in Vermont."

"How was that?"

"He put a hundred dollars in an air tight stove for safe keeping. He was afraid his wife would see it and want to spend it if he put it in a trunk or bureau drawer. As it turned out, he had better have taken his wife into his confidence. Not knowing that the stove was doing service as a bank, she kindled a fire in it one damp day, and that was the last of the hundred dollars."

"I don't think I shall put the money in the stove, though it is June," said Adin Dunham. "Besides, my wife knows all about it, and she isn't one of the spendin' kind."

"That is lucky for you. Well, here is a pile of fifty-dollar bills—twenty of them. I will count them before you, so that you may see they are all right, and then you may give me a receipt."

So the thousand dollars were counted out, and Adin Dunham put them into his capacious pocket, which perhaps in its history of five years had never contained in the aggregate so large a sum of money.

The carpenter breathed a deep sigh of satisfaction. The moment he had so long anticipated had

arrived, and he carried with him a sum which seemed to him a fortune, all his, and all to be disposed of as he willed. He straightened up unconsciously, for he felt that he had become a person of importance.

He jumped into his buggy, and when he had finished his errands in Rockmount, he started in the direction of home.

CHAPTER VI.

DEAN DUNHAM FINDS HIS UNCLE.

WHEN Adin Dunham reached the fork in the road from which there were two different routes to Waterford, he halted his horse in indecision.

"Seems to me as if I'd rather go over the creek road," he said to himself. "I don't know why 'tis that I don't fancy goin' through the woods to-day. It's a silly fancy, no doubt, for I've gone that way hundreds of times, and I told the squire I'd go that way, and I'll do it, or he'll think strange of it."

So he turned to the left instead of the right, and continued his journey. Is it true that we have presentiments of coming evil? This was at any rate the case with Adin Dunham. He felt a growing uneasiness, especially when he drew near the tract of woods through which the road ran for nearly quarter of a mile.

"What is the matter with me?" he asked, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. "I suppose it must be because I have so much money with me. I wish I had taken a check."

Then he tried to laugh it off, but he could not drive away the feeling of uneasiness. Somehow the

thought of robbers would present itself to his mind.

"I'd give a five-dollar bill if I was safe at home," he said to himself.

He had reached the middle point of the woods, and was beginning to breathe easier. Neither before nor behind was any one in sight.

"It's all right!" he thought. "As soon as I get through them woods I shall have nothing to worry about."

But just then a noise was heard to the right, and a tramp burst out, his features concealed by a mask, and sprang for the horse's head.

"Halt there!" he exclaimed in a hoarse voice.

Adin Dunham's tongue refused service, and with pallid cheeks, betokening intense fear, he stared at the apparition.

"What do you want?" he managed to ejaculate at last.

"Quick! Give me that money," hissed the stranger.

"What money?" asked Adin Dunham, aghast, though he knew well enough what money was meant.

"No trifling, or it will be the worse for you! Give me the thousand dollars you have in your pocket."

"Are you a robber?" asked Dunham, with blanched face.

"Never mind what I am! I want that money. It will be as much as your life is worth to refuse."

Adin Dunham was not a brave man, but the prospect of losing his fortune, for which he had waited

so long, made him desperate. He drew out his whip and lashed the horse.

"Get up, Captain!" he shouted.

Then, he hardly knew how it happened, the tramp clambered into the wagon, and pressed a handkerchief to his mouth. He felt his senses going, but before he lost consciousness he saw something that startled him. The tramp opened his mouth, and he caught sight of the long tusk-like teeth.

"Why, it's Squire Bates!" he ejaculated, in horror-struck dismay.

Then he lost all consciousness, and knew not what followed.

"Confusion!" muttered the tramp. "Why did I open my mouth?"

He thrust his hand into Adin Dunham's pocket, after stopping the horse. Then, as it would not be safe to leave the horse under the management of a man in a faint, he took the passive form of the carpenter from the wagon, and laid him down under a tree by the roadside.

"There! It will be supposed that he fell from the wagon in a fit!" he said to himself, as he left the scene.

This was what had happened to Adin Dunham. How long he lay in his senseless condition cannot be told. At length he opened his eyes, and looked about him in a dazed way.

"Where is the horse and wagon?" he asked himself.

The horse and wagon were not to be seen. The

Captain had waited patiently, looking round from time to time, and gazing in evident doubt at his driver, whinneying a hint that they had been stopping long enough. Probably he wondered what was the matter with Adin Dunham, who, though not his master, was well known to him.

At length the Captain decided that he must settle the matter for himself. He started for home at an easy pace, and arrived there at length, as we know, very much to the surprise of Mr. Gould, and the uneasiness of Dean Dunham. We have already related the sequel—how Mr. Gould and Dean got into the buggy, and, somewhat to the dissatisfaction of the horse, started back on the road to Rockmount.

"I can't see what has happened to uncle," said Dean.

"Does your uncle ever—drink anything strong?" asked Mr. Gould, cautiously.

"No, Mr. Gould, he is very temperate. He has often cautioned me about drinking."

"I always thought he was temperate, Dean," said Mr. Gould, "but I thought it just possible he might have met some old friends in Rockmount, and ventured upon a social glass."

"I don't believe he would do it."

"He might have got off for a minute, and the horse taken advantage and started without him. But that doesn't seem like the Captain. He is a very steady, reliable horse, and isn't up to any tricks."

"I hope uncle wasn't taken sick, and fell from the buggy."

"Has he ever been taken that way?" asked Mr. Gould quickly.

"Not that I ever heard. Aunt would know."

"We will ask her if we don't find him on the road. Do you know whether your uncle had any particular business in Rockmount to-day?"

"No; I didn't hear him say why he was going. I asked him to take me, but he thought two would be too heavy a load for the horse such a long distance."

"He is very considerate of the Captain, more so than I am," said Mr. Gould, laughing. "I drove to Rockmount with Mrs. Gould, who weighs considerably more than you, only last week, but I couldn't see that the horse minded it much. There's one thing I'm sure of, your uncle wouldn't over-drive the horse."

"No, he doesn't drive fast enough for me. If I had gone, I would have asked him to let me drive."

"Then perhaps it's just as well that you didn't go, Dean."

They reached the point where it was necessary to decide whether to go by the creek road or through the woods.

"I declare, Dean, it puzzles me to decide which way to go."

"If anything happened to uncle on the creek road somebody would be sure to pass and see him."

"That's a very sensible suggestion. On the woods road, on the contrary, there are but few passengers, and he might be overlooked. So be it! We'll go by the woods road."

Not far from the place where Adin Dunham was waylaid, Dean pointed eagerly to an advancing figure.

"Isn't that Uncle Adin?" he asked eagerly pointing with his whip.

"Yes, it is, I declare."

Adin Dunham was walking with his head drooping, and seemed to drag one leg after the other in a weary way. He did not seem at all like himself.

"Uncle Adin," called Dean, when they were within hearing, "what's the matter? What has happened to you?"

Adin Dunham looked up, and sighed heavily.

"Dean," he said hoarsely, "I've been robbed!"

"Robbed, neighbor Dunham?" said Mr. Gould in surprise. "What have you been robbed of?"

"A thousand dollars!" answered Dunham in a spiritless way.

Dean and Mr. Gould looked at each other in amazement. The same thought came to each. That the carpenter could have had in his possession a thousand dollars seemed preposterous. His mind must suddenly have gone astray.

"Did you say a thousand dollars, neighbor Dunham?" asked Mr. Gould.

"Yes," said poor Adin, bursting into tears. "A man sprang at me when I was riding through the woods, jumped into the buggy and searched my pockets. I think I must have fainted away. When I came to the horse was gone, and I was lying under a tree by the roadside."

This story, though strictly correct, seemed a wild dream to Mr. Gould and Dean.

"How did you happen to have a thousand dollars with you? Was it yours?" asked Mr. Gould, almost with a smile.

"I received it to-day at Rockmount, for the land I sold the hotel people."

"Have you any idea who robbed you of the money?"

"It was Squire Bates. I knew him by his teeth."

"Dean," said Mr. Gould, in a low voice, "your uncle is as crazy as a bedbug! What can have put such notions into his head?"

CHAPTER VII.

DEAN FINDS A CLEW.

Dean was inclined to agree with his companion. The story told by his uncle was so preposterous that it could be explained only on the hypothesis that the speaker's mind was unbalanced.

"Did you fall out of the wagon, neighbor Dunham?" asked Mr. Gould.

"I don't know. I must have fainted."

"If you had fallen out you would have been hurt. Are you bruised anywhere?"

"No, I don't feel hurt."

"It's queer, Dean," said Mr. Gould, with a puzzled look. "I can't make it out."

"I think the robber must have taken me out of the buggy, and set me down under the tree."

"After taking your thousand dollars?"

"Yes, it is hard that I should lose it. I was countin' on what I would do with it. I thought I would pay off the mortgage on my house."

"Who holds the mortgage?"

"Squire Bates."

Again Dean and Mr. Gould exchanged looks.

Neither put any confidence in the story told by the victim.

Adin Dunham was invited to take a seat in the buggy, Dean resigning his place and sitting behind. So they reached home.

"Go in, Dean, and tell your aunt what has happened, so that she needn't be frightened when she sees your uncle," said Mr. Gould.

Dean obeyed instructions.

"Aunt," said Dean, "you are not to be frightened, but uncle met with an accident. "He isn't hurt!" he added, noticing the quick look of alarm, "but he says he has been robbed."

"Robbed! Has he lost the thousand dollars?" exclaimed Mrs. Dunham in a trembling voice.

"Did he really have a thousand dollars?" said Dean. "I thought he might be under a delusion."

"Then he says he has lost it?"

"Yes."

"Heaven help us to bear this terrible blow!" ejaculated Mrs. Dunham, sinking into a chair. "I wish he had taken you with him."

"I wish so, too. I don't believe one robber would have been a match for us both."

Here Adin Dunham entered the house. He looked ten years older than when he left it in the morning, and there was a vacant look in the eyes.

"Wife!" he said feebly, "its all gone! Some villain has robbed me of the thousand dollars."

"But you, Adin, were you hurt? You look sick."

"My head doesn't feel right. I think it's the shock."

"I'll get you some hot tea directly. You'll feel better after taking it."

"I hope so. Oh, Sarah, I didn't expect such a blow as this."

"Try not to think of it now. Get well first, and then we'll see what we can do to find the robber."

"I know him now!"

"You know who robbed you!" said his wife, stopping short in her surprise.

"Yes."

"Who was it?" Any one livin' round here?"

"It was Squire Bates."

A terrible suspicion entered the mind of the poor wife. It was clear to her that her husband's mind was unhinged. As soon as she had a chance she went out to where Dean and Mr. Gould were standing in the yard.

"Did Mr. Dunham tell you who robbed him?" she asked.

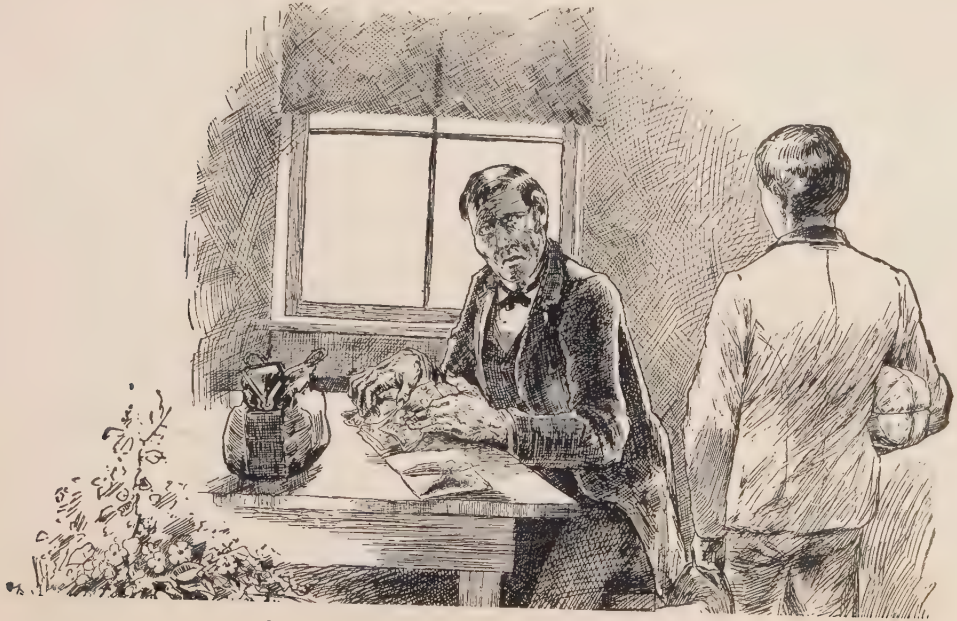
"Yes, aunt," answered Dean. "He said it was Squire Bates."

"He just told me so. What do you think of it, neighbor Gould?"

"I think your husband is upset by his accident," answered Gould, cautiously. "We'll wait and see what he says to-morrow."

"I guess you're right."

"You see he fainted away, and it's likely he hasn't



MR. KIRBY WAS COUNTING A NUMBER OF $50 BILLS.

fairly come to. At first I thought it wasn't true about the thousand dollars."

"That is true. He received it to-day from the new hotel company for some land he sold them."

"It's too bad, Mrs. Dunham. I'll do my part towards finding out the villain that robbed your poor husband."

"Uncle says he knew the squire by his teeth," said Dean, thoughtfully.

"They certainly are very peculiar teeth."

"Did you ever know anyone else having such teeth?" asked Dean.

"No, except the squire's boy."

"Yes, Brandon's teeth are just like his father's. But of course the thief wasn't Brandon."

"Look here, Dean," said Mr. Gould quickly, "I hope you don't pay any attention to that foolish story of your uncle. He was thinking of Squire Bates, as he intended to pay him up the mortgage which he holds, and he naturally pictured him with the teeth which are his most prominent feature, so to speak. I don't fancy the squire myself, but I think he is in better business than disguising himself and robbing his neighbors."

"No doubt you are right, Mr. Gould," said Dean; but in spite of his words, and absurd as he admitted the suspicion to be, he could not help dwelling upon his uncle's story.

The next day Adin Dunham kept his bed. The shock to his system was such that his strength gave away, and the doctor was summoned.

"Adin," said his wife, anxious to clear up her doubts as to his sanity, "can you describe the man that robbed you?"

"Why should I describe him? You know how he looks as well as I do."

"How should I know, Adin?"

"It was Squire Bates, I tell you. You know how he looks."

The poor woman went out of the room, and raised her apron to her eyes.

"Poor Adin is clean upset!" she murmured. "It isn't enough that he's lost his money, he must lose his mind too. Misfortunes never come singly, as my poor old father used to say.

"Dean," she continued when they were alone, "your uncle still sticks to his story that Squire Bates robbed him."

"Aunt Sarah," answered Dean gravely, "a thousand dollars would tempt almost anybody!"

"Dean, you don't mean to hint that the squire would rob anybody!"

"I don't know, aunt. A good many strange things happen in the world."

"I begin to think you are as crazy as your uncle!" said Mrs. Dunham almost angrily.

"Suppose neither of us should be crazy, aunt!"

Mrs. Dunham shook her head. She was surprised that so sensible a boy as Dean should give credence to the absurd delusion of her husband.

Meanwhile Dean had come to a conclusion as to what to do. He would visit the place where the

robbery took place—his uncle had described it so accurately that there would be no mistaking it—and see whether there was anything to be learned there.

He found an opportunity the very next afternoon. He did not say anything to his aunt, for it would only have excited her unduly. Besides, he thought it very possible that he would have to return without any information, and might be laughed at.

It was a considerable walk to the place indicated, but he reached it in due time. He was afraid he would meet some one who would ask him his object, but it was a lonely spot, and only one team passed. He saw it in time to dodge into the woods, and so avoided questioning.

When the team had passed on he came out to the road. He could see the exact position of the buggy at the time it was stopped by the robber, and he found the tree under which his uncle was placed in an unconscious condition.

"I have satisfied my curiosity," he said to himself, "but that is all. I haven't got any information."

Just then his sharp eyes fell upon a small bright object on the ground about three feet from the tree. He pounced upon it eagerly and picked it up.

It was a sleeve button, apparently gold. Just in the center was a black initial letter. This letter was B!

Dean's eyes lighted up.

"This may lead to something," he said to himself quietly, as he slipped the button into his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE WOOD.

"B STANDS for Bates," said Dean to himself. "Perhaps Uncle Adin may not be so far wrong after all. But how strange it would be if a rich and prominent man like Squire Bates should have stooped to such a crime! I find it very hard to believe."

Dean's perplexed look gave place to one of firm determination.

"I mean to look up this matter," he said resolutely, "and if my uncle has been robbed of his little fortune by this man, I'll bring him to justice if I can."

Scarcely had this purpose been formed when he heard the sound of wheels, and not caring to be found by one who might ask curious questions, he concealed himself behind a tree.

What was his surprise when, as the buggy stopped, he found that its solitary occupant was the man who had been foremost in his thoughts —Squire Bates himself.

"What does he want here?" thought Dean.

From his post behind the tree he glanced curiously at the new arrival, and watched what he should do.

Squire Bates descended from the buggy, and then walked to the very tree under which Adin Dunham had, according to his own account, found himself lying unconscious. Then he walked in different directions around it, peering carefully at the ground, as if in search of something.

"He's looking for the button!" thought Dean in growing excitement.

Then, as if distrusting his eyes, Squire Bates put on a pair of glasses, and once more resumed his search. But it proved unavailing.

"I must have dropped it somewhere else," Dean heard him mutter.

"That settles it!" thought our hero. "He means the sleeve button without doubt. My uncle is right after all, but," he added after a pause, "no one would believe the story, I must wait for additional proof. I wonder what the squire would say if he should find me here. Would he look guilty?"

Upon the impulse of the moment, not stopping to consider whether he was acting wisely or not, Dean determined to let the squire know that he was present. He did not care to arouse his suspicion, however, by letting him think that he had been watched. He therefore glided swiftly a short distance to the right, and then, showing himself openly, advanced towards the squire, whistling carelessly.

Squire Bates turned quickly at the sound, and looked annoyed when he saw who it was that intruded upon him.

"You here, Dean Dunham?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, it's Squire Bates," said Dean, as if surprised.

"Yes, it is I."

"And why do you come? It is a long walk from your house."

"That's true, but it is the place where Uncle Adin was robbed, and I thought I would come and see if I could discover anything of the money, or anything that belonged to him."

"This is the place, then? I thought it might be," said the squire composedly. "I am on my way to Rockmount, and the same idea occurred to me. But it isn't of much use. If your uncle was robbed, the money is far away by this time."

"Do you think so?" asked Dean, fixing his eyes attentively on the squire.

"Why, it is natural to suppose so. How is your uncle?"

"I left him in bed. He was upset by the shock."

"How sad! In what condition was he found?"

"He seemed bewildered, and hardly conscious where he was."

"The effect of the chloroform!" thought the squire.

"I have thought, Dean," he said in a confidential tone, "that perhaps he fainted away and fell from the buggy."

"But the money was missing."

"To be sure! Probably some tramp came along, and finding him unconscious robbed him as he lay powerless."

"I thought of that, but if he had fallen from the buggy he would have been bruised."

"And he was not?"

"There was no sign of hurt or violence, only that he seemed upset by some shock."

"What account did he give of the robbery—if there was one?" asked Squire Bates, his face expressing keen interest.

"He said that a man stopped his horse, climbed into the buggy, assaulted and robbed him."

"Humph!" said the squire, with an expression difficult to read. "Did he describe the person?"

Dean hesitated. Should he or should he not, let Squire Bates know that he was suspected! He decided to half reveal the secret.

"He thought it was some one that he knew," he answered briefly.

"Any one living around here?" asked Squire Bates, nervously.

"Excuse me, Squire Bates, but at present I think I would rather not tell. The party may be perfectly innocent, and my uncle's mind may be affected."

"Very true! It would not be at all surprising if that were the case. If you do care to take any one into your confidence, please remember that I am your uncle's friend, and might have it in my power to help you in your search."

"Yes, sir, I will remember that. I shall probably sometime wish to consult you about the matter."

There was a significance in Dean's tone that made the lawyer uneasy, but he had self-control enough not to show his feeling.

"As we are on the spot suppose we make a search,

as each of us proposed. Did your uncle lose anything except the money—his watch, for instance?"

"No, his watch was all right."

This had not occurred before to Dean as singular, Now it tended to confirm him in the thought that it might have been Squire Bates, and not some common thief, that had robbed his uncle. The plain silver watch, never very valuable, which Adin Dunham had carried for twenty-five years, might have presented a temptation to an ordinary tramp. A genteel highwayman would not have thought it worth his while to take it.

"Really that is very singular," said the squire. "Thieves generally take whatever they find, and are not very likely to leave a watch behind."

"It seems to show that the thief was no ordinary one," said Dean.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the lawyer suspiciously.

"It was a high-toned robber who wouldn't care to be burdened with an old silver watch such as Uncle Adin carried."

"True! Your remark shows penetration. I shouldn't have thought of that. Perhaps, however, there was another reason."

"What?" asked Dean, his curiosity aroused.

"The watch would easily have been identified, and might have led to the apprehension of the robber."

"Yes, there is something in that."

Meanwhile Dean and the squire continued their investigations. Dean, however, merely made a show

of searching. He felt convinced that the only thing worth discovering he had already found, but of course he had no intention of making this known to his companion.

"It would be refreshing if we could find your uncle's lost wallet—did he carry his money in a wallet?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"But we can hardly expect it."

"No, there is very little chance of it, I am afraid."

"Ha, what is this?" exclaimed the squire, who had wandered some little distance from the tree.

Dean looked up eagerly.

"Why, that is Uncle Adin's wallet," he said surprised.

"Unfortunately it is empty!" said the squire, opening it.

"Yes, so it seems. Where did you find it?"

"Just here. It is clear that the thief took the money, and threw it away."

"I suppose so," answered Dean, slowly.

"You had better take charge of it. And now I think I must resume my journey to Rockmount."

Dean sat down to think. He was puzzled by the discovery of the wallet, for he had looked in the very spot where it was found before the squire's arrival, and seen nothing. It looked as if the squire had produced it from an inner pocket, and thrown it down before picking it up, and announced its discovery.

"There is something very queer about all this!" said Dean to himself, as he walked slowly homeward.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SQUIRE'S BOLD STROKE.

"THAT boy evidently suspects me," thought Renwick Bates, contracting his forehead. "He is altogether too smart. With the help of his uncle, whose suspicions are already excited, he may make me trouble. I must take a bold course, and make the accusations look ridiculous.

Squire Bates kept on his way till he reached Rockmount, and drove at once to the office of Thomas Marks.

"How do you do, Squire Bates?" asked the agent politely.

"Very well, thank you. I suppose you have heard of the robbery?"

"To what do you allude?"

"Adin Dunham was stopped on his way home yesterday, and robbed of a thousand dollars!"

"You don't mean it?" returned the agent. "Why I paid him that money with my own hands."

"So I supposed. Why didn't you give him a check?"

"He preferred the bills. Besides, as you have no bank at Waterford, he could have done nothing with the check."

"That is true; I didn't think of that. But it's a pity as it happened."

"Can you tell me any of the details of the robbery?"

"I talked with Dean Dunham, the nephew, only this morning. I have not seen Adin himself."

"What does the boy say?"

Squire Bates repeated what he had heard from Dean, though he might have gone more into details from his own knowledge. This, of course, he could not venture upon.

"It seems extraordinary," said Thomas Marks, thoughtfully. "How could the robber have known that Adin Dunham had received any money?"

"He might have seen him at your office."

"I don't pay money to every one that calls upon the," said Marks, smiling.

"No, or I should call for my installment," returned the squire jocosely. "Perhaps it might have been some one connected with the hotel company. I suppose they knew the money was to be called for to-day?"

"Yes."

"By the way, in what shape did you pay the money?"

"You mean in bills of what denomination?"

"Yes."

"In fifty-dollar bills."

"Twenty fifties then?"

"Yes."

"That information may prove important. Were the bills all on one bank?"

"No, from several. Some, I think, were silver certificates."

"If this had happened in England the numbers of the notes would have been noted."

"Exactly. That is one advantage the English detectives have over ours. May I ask if you have been retained by Adin Dunham to work out the case?"

"No; I haven't even seen him since the robbery, but as he is a neighbor I naturally take an interest in the affair. If I can do anything to ferret out the thief, or recover the money, I will do so gladly, and it shall cost Dunham nothing."

"Your words do you credit, Squire Bates," said the agent, warmly.

"I think I have misjudged Bates. He is a better man than I gave him credit for," reflected Thomas Marks.

"I sympathize with the poor man heartily," continued the squire, following up the favorable impression which he could see that he had made. "A thousand dollars is a fortune to him. To us, Mr. Marks, it would not be so important."

"Speak for yourself, squire. I am by no means a millionaire."

"Nor I," rejoined Squire Bates, laughing. "The assessors of Waterford would be glad if I were."

"Still I don't think you are in any danger of going to the poor house," continued the agent.

"Well, no, perhaps not. But I must be getting home. I suppose you will warn the merchants here to look out for any fifty-dollar bills that may be offered them."

"Yes; it is a good suggestion. I don't think, however, that the robber will be apt to spend his money in this neighborhood."

"I presume not. From all I can gather he is a wandering tramp, who possibly only expected to get a few dollars, and will probably be quite bewildered when he finds what a haul he has made."

"I hope for poor Dunham's sake he will be found out."

"Amen to that!" said Squire Bates, with a queer smile.

"What a droll world it is!" soliloquized the lawyer as he turned his horse's head towards Waterford. "How that worthy Marks would have been astonished if he had known that the bold and audacious robber had been holding a conversation with him! I must send away those fifty-dollar notes. Their use in this neighborhood would be suicidal.

"I think my call upon this man Marks is a clever stroke!" the squire complacently continued musing to himself. "I must venture upon a still bolder, stroke, and call upon Adin Dnnham, though under the circumstances I feel rather nervous aboat it. If that young Dean were out of the way I should feel more comfortable. It may be necessary to get rid of him, but that can wait. I understand from my boy Brandon that Dean treated him very disrespectfully, not to say insolently, only yesterday. As Brandon truly remarks, the boy is as proud as he is poor, and doesn't know his place. A working boy occupies an humble position, and owes deference to his superiors

in station. I might have him arrested for taking possession of Brandon's boat by violence, but at present it would not be politic. Our turn will come after a while, and then Dean Dunham must look out!"

When Squire Bates reached Waterford he drove to the house of Adin Dunham. Dean was standing in the yard.

"Please hold my horse, Dean," said the squire pleasantly, "I am going to call upon your uncle."

"I don't know whether he can see you, sir," said Dean, doubtfully.

"At any rate I can ask. I called on Mr. Marks, from whom your uncle received the money."

"Did you learn anything, sir?"

"Yes, I learned that the money was paid in fifty-dollar bills—just twenty of them. You can see that this is important. If any one in this neighborhood offers a fifty-dollar bill in payment for any article it should be investigated."

"Yes, sir."

Dean regarded the squire with a puzzled expression. He seemed to take so much interest in the matter of the robbery, to be so desirous of throwing obstacles in the way of the thief, that Dean began to think his suspicions unwarranted. Yet there was his uncle's description of the robber, and again there was the tell-tale sleeve button in his pocket.

"It beats me!" was Dean's conclusion. "Things may clear up, but at present it seems particularly foggy."

"Please ask your aunt if I may see Mr. Dunham," said the squire. "I will tie the horse."

Dean went in and proffered the request, adding, "Squire Bates has just returned from Rockmount, where he had an interview with the man who gave uncle the money. He says it was all in fifty-dollar bills."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Dunham, doubtfully. "Perhaps it may be as well to let the squire go in. We ought to be doin' somethin' to catch the thief, and the squire's a lawyer."

So it happened that without notification to Dunham she entered the sick room followed by the squire.

"Adin, I've brought Squire Bates to see you," she said soothingly.

Instantly Dunham became excited and manifested alarm.

"Take him away!" he cried, apparently warding off an attack with his hands. "He is the man that robbed me!"

The squire was prepared for this, and he had decided what to do.

"What!" he exclaimed in a tone of concern, "is poor Dunham's mind affected?"

"Yes, I fear the shock was too much for him," said Mrs. Dunham, sorrowfully. "What in the world should have put such an idea into his head?"

"I tell you he is the man that robbed me!" exclaimed Adin Dunham. "I know him by those long teeth. Give me back my thousand dollars,

Squire Bates!" he continued piteously. "They were all I had."

"Poor man! I am inexpressibly shocked. I see that my presence excites him, and I will go."

"I hope you will excuse his words, squire. He doesn't know what he says."

"Yes, he does, and he means it too. That man knew I was to bring back a large sum of money, and he lay in wait for me."

"I had better go, I think," said the squire nervously.

Mrs. Dunham followed him from the room, continuing her apologies.

"Don't say a word, my dear madam," said the squire in a sympathetic tone. "I feel for you, indeed I do. To prove it, I will head a subscription to make up to your husband a part of his loss. I will put down fifty dollars."

"You are very kind, Squire Bates. How can I thank you."

"Don't thank me at all, but rest assured that I will do all I can for Mr. Dunham, notwithstanding his strange delusion respecting myself."

"That's clever stroke number two," thought the squire, as he rode homeward. "I think I have thoroughly disarmed suspicion now."

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSING SLEEVE BUTTON.

Squire Bates was as good as his word. He drew up a subscription paper, and headed it with a subscription of fifty dollars, and went through the village with it. At the end of three days he came again to Adin Dunham's plain home, and handed Mrs. Dunham a hundred and fifty dollars.

"It won't make up your husband's loss," he said, "but it is better than nothing. I wish I could afford to give more myself."

"How kind you are, Squire Bates!" said Mrs. Dunham, weeping softly. "God has indeed raised up a friend for us in our time of trouble."

"Don't make too much of my poor service, Mrs. Dunham," said the squire modestly. "It is a great deal easier for me to give fifty dollars than for your husband to lose a thousand."

"True; but you are very kind, all the same."

When Mrs. Dunham told Adin what the squire had done, he kept silence for a moment, and was obviously perplexed.

"I don't understand it," he murmured.

"I hope, now, Adin, you will give up the ridiculous idea that the squire robbed you," said his wife.

"I can't," said Adin. "I saw him with these very eyes. I saw those long teeth of his just as plain as I see you this minute. It's very queer. I can't understand it."

"Oh, Adin! I did hope you would get this out of your head. It almost seems as if your mind was upset."

"Perhaps it is, but I can't give up the idea that the squire took my thousand dollars."

"It stands to reason, Adin, that if he had, he wouldn't have taken all this trouble to raise money for you. Why, he gave fifty dollars out of his own pocket."

"Did fifty dollars of this money come from the squire?"

"Yes. Just look at his name on the paper. His name is the very first one on it."

"Then," said Adin Dunham, carefully counting out fifty dollars from the roll of bills which had been placed in his hand, "I'll give back the money to you to do what you like with. The other money came from my friends and neighbors, and I'll keep it. But the squire's money I don't want."

"I'm afraid you are very obstinate, Adin. Why shouldn't the squire's money be as good as anybody's?"

"I don't want to put myself under any obligations to him," said Adin, stiffly.

"You are willin' I should keep the money?"

"Do as you please, Sarah. Only don't let me hear any more of it."

Saran Dunham put the fifty dollars carefully aside. It seemed strange to her to have so much money in her individual possession. She felt grateful to the squire, if Adin did not.

Weeks passed, and Adin Dunham was able to go about his work. But he seemed a changed man. All his ambition and energy seemed to be gone. He was no longer able to do as much work as formerly, and he went about the place in a listless manner, which made Dean and his aunt feel anxious. Whenever he caught sight of the squire he hurried away, apparently anxious to avoid him.

Renwick Bates did not appear to take any notice of this silence, but it disturbed him.

"He hasn't got over the thought that I robbed him," he said to himself. "Why was I furnished with these wretched tusks? If I had teeth like other people, I should not have been identified. There's one good thing, nobody is likely to share his suspicion. That subscription paper and my large contribution have completely blinded the eyes of people. If he persists in his charge, he will only convince his neighbors that he is a fit subject for an insane asylum."

There was one, however, who fully believed his uncle's story, and that was Dean, who also avoided the squire when it was in his power to do so. He still had in his possession the sleeve button that he had found in the wood, but he had not yet shown it to any one. He was considering what to do about it. He had no doubt about its being the property of

Squire Bates, and finally he determined to put it to the proof by letting Brandon see it accidentally.

He waited for a favorable opportunity. One day when the boys were at recess, and Brandon standing only three feet distant, he plunged his hand into his pocket, and drew out three pennies and the tell-tale sleeve button, showing it so plainly that Brandon couldn't help seeing it.

"Where did you get that button?" asked Brandon sharply.

"What button?"

"The sleeve button marked 'B.'"

"I found it," answered Dean composedly.

"Where did you find it?"

"Why do you feel so much interest in it?" demanded Dean. "I don't know that I am called upon to tell you where I found it."

"I believe you stole it!" said Brandon.

"Say that again, Brandon Bates, and I'll knock you over!" retorted Dean with spirit. "Do you mean to insult me?"

"I have a right to say what I did. That sleeve button belongs to my father."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Dean, his face lighting up, for he had made the discovery he desired.

"Yes, I am sure of it. I have seen the button plenty of times. Besides, you know B stands for Bates."

"It also stands for Bunting," answered Dean. "How do I know but it was lost by Sam Bunting?"

Sam Bunting was a poor, ragged, half-witted fellow,

who was the good-natured butt of the village people.

"There's nothing to joke about, Dean Dunham," said Brandon angrily. "I tell you the sleeve button belongs to my father. Give it to me right away!"

"Hold on a minute! Don't be so impatient. Has your father mentioned losing a sleeve button?"

"No," Brandon was compelled to admit.

"Then you may be mistaken."

"I know I can't be mistaken. Haven't I seen the sleeve button plenty of times?"

"Very likely, but it may belong to some one else, after all."

"Did you pick up the other also?" asked Brandon.

'No."

"Where did you pick it up?"

"I don't think it necessary to tell you."

"You will have to tell my father."

"That is just what I am willing to do. If you will find out whether your father has lost such a button, and will let me know, I will go and see him about it, and answer any questions he may choose to ask about where I found it."

"It will be just the same if you give it to me."

"Excuse me, Brandon, but I prefer to surrender it to your father."

"That's fair enough, Brandon," said a boy who had listened to this conversation.

"I suppose Dean wants to sell it for old gold," said Brandon insolently.

"You needn't trouble yourself about supposing," said Dean coolly. "If I find the sleeve button belongs

to your father, I shall be perfectly willing to give it up to him."

"Because you will have to."

"Put it that way if you want to. I don't care to keep what doesn't belong to me."

"How long have you had the sleeve button?"

"About a week."

When Brandon went home from school he lost no time in reporting the matter to his father.

"Papa," he said, "Dean Dunham's got a sleeve button of yours."

"What!" exclaimed Squire Bates nervously.

"One of the sleeve buttons marked 'B.' Did you know you had lost one of them?"

"No. So—the Dunham boy has got it?"

"Yes; he showed it to me at recess."

"Wher did he say he got it?" asked Squire Bates, with a disturbed look.

"He wouldn't tell me. I asked him, but he said he wouldn't tell any one but you; and, though I told him I kn w it was yours, he wouldn't give it to me."

"The boy did right," said Squire Bates, recovering his self-possession. "Perhaps it isn't mine."

"But I know it is yours, papa!" persisted Brandon.

"Very w ll! You may ask Dean Dunham to bring it to me. I can soon decide that point."

"This is awkward!" said the squire to himself, as he paced the room after Brandon had left his presence. "I can guess where the boy found the button. I must put him off the track by as plausible an explanation as I can devise."

CHAPTER XI.

DEAN RECEIVES A GIFT.

My father says you are to call with the sleeve button, Dean Dunham, said Brandon Bates, in an imperious tone.

"Very well; I shall be happy to oblige him," answered Dean, with a smile. "I will call this evening if you think he will be at home."

"Yes, he will be at home. And, I say, you'd better tell him the truth."

"I always do. I judge from your caution that you don't."

"If you're going to talk to me, Dean Dunham," said Brandon, scowling, "you'd better be respectful."

"Then you must deserve my respect."

The colloquy was interrupted by the ringing of the school bell.

That evening Brandon Bates watched for the coming of Dean, being curious to learn where it was that he had found the sleeve button. He accompanied Dean into his father's private room, where Squire Bates was sitting at a writing-desk.

"Here's Dean Dunham, papa!" he said.

"Very well, Brandon, you may withdraw, and leave Dean alone with me."

"Mayn't I stay, papa?" asked Brandon, his face elongating with the disappointment he felt at the unexpected exclusion.

"No, it is not necessary, my son."

Brandon went out sulkily, and installed himself at the door with his ear at the keyhole. But he was decidedly nonplussed when Squire Bates, moving softly to the door, opened it unexpectedly, and he nearly tumbled in.

"Didn't I tell you to leave?" demanded his father, sternly.

"I'm going," answered Brandon, in a shamefaced manner.

"How is your uncle, Dean?" asked Squire Bates, resuming his seat at the desk.

"Not very well, Squire Bates. He hasn't been himself since the robbery."

"Oh, ah! Yes. It was, no doubt, quite a shock to him. Let us hope he will soon be himself again."

"I don't think he will be himself till he recovers the money."

"I suppose you have not learned anything about it as yet."

"Well, we have a clew," said Dean, slowly.

"What sort of a clew?" asked the squire, nervously.

"Well, not enough to speak of yet."

"By the way," continued the squire, carelessly," Brandon tells me you have found a sleeve button which he thinks belongs to me."

"Yes, sir, would you like to see it?"

"Certainly, if you have it with you."

Dean produced from his vest pocket the button already referred to.

"Is it yours?" he inquired.

"It looks very much like one I once owned," said the squire, taking it in his hand. "Did you find the mate to it?"

"No," answered Dean, in surprise. "Is the other button lost also?"

"Yes," said Squire Bates. "By the by, where did you find it?"

"Only a few feet from the spot where my uncle was robbed—in the woods," answered Dean, scrutinizing the face of the lawyer closely as he spoke. But Squire Bates was prepared for this disclosure, and betrayed neither surprise nor confusion.

"Indeed!" he said. "This is most interesting. When did you find it?"

"On the day afterwards."

"It must have been dropped by the person who robbed your uncle, then?"

"That is just what I thought," said Dean, much surprised by this apparent confession on the part of the squire.

"I must now tell you that the sleeve buttons, with a small sum of money, mysteriously disappeared about that time," the squire continued, in a confi-

dential manner. "I am inclined to attribute their loss to a tramp who was seen prowling round my house the day before your uncle's misfortune. It looks as if both robberies were by the same person."

Dean stared at the squire in amazement. He had not foreseen this crafty explanation, and though he utterly disbelieved in its truth, he saw no way of discrediting it. The bomb which he anticipated exploding to the squire's utter confusion in the light of this statement appeared a very innocent and harmless one indeed. He kept silent, but the cunning squire with pleasure noted his discomfiture.

Dean was almost inclined to ask himself if this could be the real explanation when the thought of his uncle's description of the robber occurred to him. But on this point he did not think it would do any good at present to speak.

"I wish," added the squire with a smile, "you had found both the sleeve buttons, as I would in that case have asked your acceptance of them."

"They are marked B," objected Dean.

"True; I did not think of that. Let me then ask your acceptance of a small reward," and Squire Bates drew from his pocket a silver dollar.

But Dean shrank back. He was convinced in spite of all that Squire Bates was the robber of Adin Dunham, and he didn't feel willing to accept any favor at his hands.

Thank you," he answered, "but I don't care to make money."

"Perhaps you have all the money you want," said

the squire, with a sneer which he did not quite succeed in repressing.

"Money is very scarce with all of us, Squire Bates," said Dean, gravely, "but I would rather earn what I get. If you will give me the button I will accept it."

"What good will it do you? demanded the Squire, suspiciously.

"Probably none at all. But if this tramp should be found, and proved to have the other button, it would be good evidence against him, wouldn't it?"

"Just so!" said the squire, after a pause. "Well, you may keep it.

"Thank you, sir."

"I won't detain you any longer, if you wish o go," continued the squire, politely. "Perhaps you would like to remain awhile with Brandon."

"If Brandon invites me to stay I will do so," answered Dean.

"Very well."

Dean left the room, and out in the yard he found Brandon, awaiting his appearance with evident curiosity.

"Well," he said, "did pa haul you over the coals?"

"Why should he? I did him a favor, didn't I, in finding his sleeve button?"

"Then he said it was his?"

"Yes."

"Did he ask you why you didn't bring it to him before?"

"No, he treated me with great politeness, and asked me to accept the sleeve button."

"What?

Dean repeated his statement.

"But if you keep this the other won't be any good to him."

"He says both sleeve buttons were stolen from him the day before my uncle's robbery by a tramp —that is, he thinks it was a tramp."

"Jehu! That's the first I ever heard of it," said Brandon, in great surprise.

"Just as I thought," said Dean to himself. "Your father can probably give you all the particulars," he added aloud.

"But you haven't told me where you found it, Dean."

"Your father can tell you that too."

"What a stiff, disobliging boy you are!" exclaimed Brandon, angrily. "Why can't you tell me yourself?"

"I think your father would prefer to tell you himself."

"Dean you can't want that button. I'll give you twenty-five cents for it."

"I never give away gifts," returned Dean.

When Brandon later on plied his father with questons the latter declined to gratify his curiosity.

"But why did you give Dean the sleeve button, papa?"

"As a reward for his honesty. There, I'm tired of the whole subject, and prefer to drop it."

"I wish you had given me the sleeve button."

"I'll buy you a new pair when I go to Philadelphia. Will that do?"

Brandon was very well pleased with this promise, and dropped the subject.

When all the family had retired, Squire Bates took from a secret drawer in his desk the mate of the missing sleeve button—its counterpart in every particular.

"I must get rid of this," he said. "In connection with that boy's story its discovery in my possession would be a damaging piece of evidence."

CHAPTER XII.

DEAN'S NEW PLANS.

THE next morning Squire Bates rose half an hour before breakfast, and took a walk in the garden behind the house. He had his cane with him, which was unusual, as he was not leaving his own grounds. He proceeded to the lower end of the garden, and then, thrusting the point of the cane into the soft loam, made in this way a round hole, perhaps eight inches deep, into which he carefully dropped the solitary sleeve button, and then filled up the hole again.

"There," said he to himself in a tone of satisfaction, "that disposes of the button. Now Dean Dunham can say what he likes, he can't throw suspicion on me."

As he re-entered the house he met Brandon just coming downstairs.

"You're up early, papa," he said.

"Yes, I was tired of the bed and got up a few minutes earlier than usual."

"Have you been out?"

"Only walking in the garden a few minutes."

"Haven't you got a mortgage on Adin Dunham's place?"

"Yes."

"Suppose he doesn't pay up?"

"I don't think he is able to pay up."

"Can't you foreclose the mortgage?"

"Yes, but I shouldn't like to worry the old man—at present."

"I was thinking of Dean. He don't treat me with any respect. He doesn't seem to know that you could turn the whole family out of doors."

"You don't like Dean, I infer."

"No, I don't," said Brandon, bluntly.

"He is rather independent for a boy in his circumstances," said the squire, slowly. "Sometime he may regret it."

Squire Bates raised his eyebrows slightly, and his words conveyed a vague threat.

"However," he added, "he may become more sensible, and understand his position better. Let us hope he will."

Brandon was not slow in communicating what had been said to Dean. The next time they had a difference he said: "You'd better keep good friends with me, Dean Dunham."

"Why," asked Dean, struck by his tone.

"Because my father's got a mortgage on your uncle's place, and I may get him to turn you all out into the street."

"Has he any idea of doing it?" asked Dean, quickly.

"Not if you behave yourself—that is, not at present."

"Thank you! You are very kind to give me warning."

In the evening Dean spoke to his uncle about the matter.

"Uncle Adin," he said, "Squire Bates holds a mortgage on this place, doesn't he?"

"Yes, Dean," answered his uncle, sadly.

"For how much?"

"Eight hundred dollars. I meant to pay off the mortgage with the thousand dollars that I was robbed of. I always feel uneasy when I think of our home being at the mercy of any one, no matter who it is."

"Do you think the squire wants you to pay up the mortgage?"

"No; he said he was satisfied to have it remain, as it paid fair interest."

"Brandon Bates let drop a hint that his father might call it in, if I didn't treat him with more respect."

"Is there any quarrel between you two boys?" asked Adin, somewhat anxiously.

"Well, we don't agree very well. He wants me to bow down before him, and I don't mean to do it."

"I hope you won't quarrel seriously, Dean. His father holds me in his power, and it's best to keep on good terms with him."

"Uncle Adin, I wish you had been able to pay up that mortgage," said Dean, earnestly. "I don't like the squire much better than his son."

DEAN HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH SQUIRE BATES.

"I am afraid there is no hope of it now, Dean," said Adin Dunham, sighing, "unless I can get my lost money back."

"Uncle Adin, I want to help you pay the mortgage, and for that reason I want you to let me leave home."

"What have you got in your head, Dean? What good will it do to leave home?"

"I can earn some money. Here in Waterford there is no chance for a boy like me to get hold of any."

"It's a risky thing for a boy as young as you to start for himself, Dean. Besides there's John Roberts, the shoemaker, will take you into his shop and teach you the business. He told me last week he'd give you three dollars a week."

"I want to earn money faster than that, uncle. It would take all that to pay my expenses."

"What do you want me to do, Dean?"

"To let me leave home if a good chance offers."

"I'll see about it, Dean; but I'm afraid you're miscalculatin' your strength."

"Thank you, uncle, other boys have succeeded, and I think I can."

A day or two afterwards, Brandon said to his father, "What do you think Dean Dunham says?"

"I am sure I can't imagine," answered the squire, with a shade of uneasiness. He feared that Dean might have been speaking out his suspicions in relation to the robbery of his uncle.

"He says his uncle has consented to let him

leave home if a good job offers. He wants to go out into the world to seek his fortune."

"It might not be a bad idea," said Bates.

"I don't think he'd meet with any success," said Brandon, sharply. "He thinks he is awful smart, and would come home with a fortune in six months."

"Boys are apt to be sanguine," said his father, smiling.

"Would you be willing to have me leave home to seek my fortune?"

"No; but your case is different. Dean's uncle is a poor man."

"I suppose he could black boots for a living in some large place."

"Well, bootblacks sometimes make very good pay."

"You seem to be in favor of Dean's going away, papa?"

"I feel no particular interest in the matter. I confess I don't like the boy, but for his uncle's sake I hope he may do well. And, now, Brandon, I must ask you to leave me, as I have some letters to write."

"That will be a good solution of the difficulty," soliloquized Renwick Bates, when he found himself alone. "The boy evidently suspects me, and I should like to get him out of the way. Some accident might happen to him, or he might get into some scrape. At any rate, his plan chimes in with my own wishes, and if I have an opportunity I will help him to leave Waterford."

Two days later, as Dean was walking home from the village store with a small basket of groceries, he met a stranger—a man with very dark hair and a sallow complexion. He was of medium size, and had a cast in one eye which gave a sinister expression to his face.

"I suppose you live in the village, boy?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Then perhaps you can direct me to the house of Renwick Bates."

"Squire Bates?"

"Is that what you call him?" asked the stranger, with an amused smile.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, sir. I will conduct you to his house, if you wish."

"Thank you; I wish you would."

Dean had to go out of his way a short distance, but, being of an obliging disposition, he did so willingly.

"That is the house, sir."

"Thank you; I haven't any change, or I would pay you for your trouble."

"It is quite unnecessary," said Dean, hastily. "I don't care for any pay."

"Well, thank you, then."

"I wonder who that is," thought Dean. "I don't like his looks much, and I wish he hadn't offered me pay for guiding him. He doesn't seem to have been here before."

As the stranger turned into the front yard, he saw Brandon, sitting on the bank, whistling.

"I don't need to ask whose son you are," said the stranger, smiling.

"Why not?" demanded Brandon, haughtily.

"Those teeth are unmistakable, my young friend."

"Do you mean to insult me? Who are you, any way?" asked Brandon, imperiously.

"A friend of your father's who won't stand any impudence!" said the stranger, sharply. "Go into the house and tell him that Peter Kirby wishes to see him."

Cowed by the stranger's manner, Brandon sulkily obeyed.

CHAPTER XIII.

PETER KIRBY.

If Brandon had supposed the stranger would prove an unwelcome visitor to his father, he would have been undeceived if he could have been present at the interview between them.

"What, Kirby!" said the squire, as the new arrival entered his study.

"Yes, it is I, captain," answered Peter Kirby, sinking into an arm-chair. "You seem comfortably fixed here."

"Yes; I have tried to make myself comfortable."

"And I understand you go by the name of squire?"

"How did you learn that?"

"From a boy who guided me here."

"I hope you did not express any surprise."

"Oh, no! I did nothing to arouse suspicion. Are you a justice of the peace?"

"Yes."

"And perhaps preside over trials?"

"Well, yes, sometimes."

"Ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" demanded the squire irritably.

"It is a good joke. Suppose the good people here were acquainted with your real character?"

"Hush; this is no time for jesting. You might be overheard. Now, what news?"

"Well, there isn't much. Things have been pretty quiet. You haven't been at any of our meetings lately?"

"No; I did not care to excite suspicion. I've been engaged in a little enterprise on my own account."

"What, here?"

"Yes."

"What was it?" asked Kirby with interest.

"I learned that one of my neighbors—a simple minded carpenter—was to receive a considerable sum of money, which I had reason to think he would bring home in person. I disguised myself, lay in wait for him, and took the whole."

"How much was there?"

"A thousand dollars!"

"Excellent! And you have it here?"

"Yes. It happened to be in fifty-dollar bills, and I have not dared to use any of it lest it should be traced to me. Besides, there is one who suspects me of having been implicated in the affair?"

"Is it a person likely to prove dangerous?"

"I don't know. It is a boy."

"A boy! How should a boy be likely to suspect you?"

"I will tell you. It is a nephew of the man who lost the money. Near the scene of the robbery he found a sleeve button marked with my initial, which I had the ill luck to drop."

"Does he know it is yours?"

"Yes, my son recognized it in his possession, and unfortunately let out that it was mine. I at once sent for the boy, asked to see the button, and admitted it was mine."

"How then did you explain?"

"I am coming to that. I told him that ooth buttons had been stolen from me, probably by a tramp who had been seen prowling round my house, and that I presumed the same man had robbed his uncle."

"Very ingenious, upon my word! You always were a man of ideas, captain. I suppose this allayed his suspicions."

"Not wholly, though it puzzled him. I must tell you that while I was relieving the uncle of his money, though otherwise disguised I unfortunately opened my mouth."

"And showed your teeth?"

"Precisely. I have often had occasion to regret that Nature supplied me with such ugly looking tusks, for they are a dangerous means of identification. I understand the carpenter—one Adin Dunham—has spoken of this, but it seemed absurd to those who heard him that a man in my position should be a robber, and it was taken as a proof that he was out of his head. I strengthened this impression by taking

a foremost part in raising a subscription for the carpenter to compensate him partially for his loss, and myself contributed fifty dollars."

"Out of the man's own money?" asked Kirby laughing.

"No, I didn't venture to use one of the fifty dollars. I used other money which I had."

"Then you have the money by you still?"

"Yes."

Squire Bates rose from his seat, locked the door, and then opening a small cabinet drew out a roll of bills—which he counted before his visitor."

"See," he said, "Here are twenty bills, amounting in all to a thousand dollars."

Peter Kirby's eyes brightened covetously as he eyed this large sum of money.

"It was a good haul for one man to make, in a quiet place like this," he said.

"So I flatter myself," said Squire Bates complacently.

"But I can't help expressing my surprise at your burying yourself in such a small, out of the way place. If you were in one of our large cities, for instance, it would be much more convenient, and the rest of the band could communicate with you better."

Squire Bates rose and paced the room thoughtfully.

"That is true," he said, after a pause, "but you must remember also that I should stand a better chance of being recognized in a large and important place, where there is a well disciplined and efficient

police force and an organized body of detectives. No one would think of looking for me in a small, unimportant village like Waterford, where I pass as the village lawyer, and have a commission as justice of the peace."

"How do you sustain the part of a lawyer?"

"I have a few law books, and there was a time in earlier years—I think I was nineteen—when I passed six months in the office of a lawyer, where I picked up some of the rudiments of practical jurisprudence."

"Where was that?"

"In a Western town, not far from Chicago. Here no very complicated matters come before me. I am perfectly competent to draft a will, to write out a deed, make out a lease, and so on—that is all that is required of me."

"You must find it very dull living here. I couldn't stand it."

"I must live somewhere, and you must remember that I have a wife and son who are entirely ignorant of my real character."

"They suppose you to be a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"I saw your son outside. It was easy to recognize him as your son."

"Why?"

Peter Kirby touched his teeth with a significant gesture.

"He has your teeth," he said. "They are a perfect *fac simile.*"

"Yes," said the squire soberly. "He too is cursed with this deformity."

"Still, as teeth, I have no doubt they are strong and —durable."

"Yes, they will last me all my life. I have no excuse for having them extracted, and procuring an artificial set. Yet I want to do it, if I were not a coward as regards dentists. But, to come back to business. I shall hand you these bills, and ask you to exchange them for bills of other denominations. You can send them to me in an express package."

"There will be some risk about this, won't there, as it is known that the stolen money was in fifty-dollar bills?"

"Not if you go far enough away. I shall want you to go to Chicago on other business which I will communicate to you. There you will have no difficulty in effecting the change."

"I suppose I am to have a commission?"

"Yes; you can retain fifty dollars."

"That is small, captain," said Kirby, in a tone of discontent.

"It may be, but I have other work for you to do which will increase your remunerations."

"What sort of work?"

"I have already told you of a boy in the village who suspects me of being implicated in the robbery."

"Yes."

"I mean you to take him with you."

"What, and to abduct him? That will be difficult and dangerous."

"No, you are to offer him lucrative employment, and he will go with you willingly. Then you are to

get him into trouble, involve him in a crime perhaps, and he won't dare to come back. I learn from Brandon that he is anxious to obtain a position. However, I will give you detailed instructions how to proceed.'

CHAPTER XIV.

DEAN IS ENGAGED AS PRIVATE SECRETARY.

"BRANDON," said his father, "I would like to have you call at Adin Dunham's with a note."

Brandon frowned. He did not fancy being employed as an errand boy.

"Can't you get somebody else?" he asked. "I wouldn't mind going to any other place, but I don't like to go there on an errand."

"Perhaps that will overcome your objections," said his father, producing a silver dollar.

"Thank you, papa, I'll go," said Brandon with alacrity, for he was always in want of money. "Who is the note for?"

"For the boy—Dean."

"Oh!"

Brandon's face changed.

"Seems to me Dean Dunham is getting to be a person of a good deal of importance," he said. "What is the note about? If you are going to haul him over the coals I won't mind taking it."

"On the contrary, Mr. Kirby, our guest, is going to offer him a position as his clerk and private secretary."

"And did you recommend him to Mr. Kirby?" asked Brandon, considerably disgusted.

Squire Bates was sharp enough to understand the cause of Brandon's dissatisfaction.

"I don't mind telling you confidentially," he said with a smile, "that I don't envy the boy who works for Peter Kirby."

"Then it isn't such a great chance after all?"

"I suspect that Dean will be sorry he engaged to work for him within a week. But of course you won't let drop a word to prejudice the boy against accepting Mr. Kirby's offer."

"You may rely upon me, papa," said Brandon with a chuckle.

Dean was reading aloud to his uncle when there was a knock at the door, which was answered by Mrs. Dunham.

"Brandon Bates!" she said in surprise.

"Yes, Mrs. Dunham. Is Dean at home?"

"Won't you come in? Yes, he's at home."

"I won't stop. I should like to see him a minute."

"Dean, here's Brandon Bates wants to see you a minute," said his aunt.

Dean shared in Mrs. Dunham's surprise. He laid down the paper from which he was reading, and went to the door.

"Good-evening, Brandon!" he said politely, "do you wish to see me?"

"Yes. I've got a note for you. I happened to be coming this way, and I told my father I'd take it," continued Brandon, anxious to have it understood that he was not specially sent to the cottage.

"Thank you, Brandon. Won't you come in while I am reading it?"

"No, but I'll wait. I think it's short." Dean tore open the envelope, and read as follows in the handwriting of Squire Bates:

"DEAN DUNHAM:

"I understand from my son Brandon that you are seeking employment, and have no objection to leave home. A gentleman at present visiting me is in want of a clerk and secretary, and he would like to have an interview with you. As he leaves town to-morrow, I send for you this evening.

"RENWICK BATES."

Dean felt that nothing would suit him better.

He felt grateful to Squire Bates for what he regarded as a piece of unexpected kindness.

"Your father is very kind, Brandon," he said as he folded up the note. "He offers me a position with a friend of his."

"He just mentioned the matter to me," Brandon said indifferently.

"I wonder if the gentleman is one to whom I showed the way to your father's house this afternoon?"

"Like as not. I don't know him; I never saw him before."

"Then you don't know whether he lives far from here or not?"

"No."

"I wonder whether I shall suit him," queried Dean anxiously.

"My father seems to think you will," answered Brandon. "Of course I don't know anything about it."

"I will try to suit him at any rate," said Dean earnestly.

"Do you think your uncle will let you go?"

"Yes, it is a fair chance. I've talked over the matter with him and he sees that there isn't anything for me to do in Waterford, and that I shall have to leave town to get a place that is worth having."

"I shall envy you for one thing," said Brandon.

"What is that?"

"Because you will be leaving Waterford."

"It is a pretty village."

"I am sick and tired of it. There is nothing going on here. I don't see why a gentleman of my father's wealth should bury himself in such a one-horse place."

"It isn't very lively," Dean admitted.

"I should say not. Why even the circus doesn't come any nearer than ten miles. I shall tease papa to go to New York to live. I should like to live on Madison or Fifth Avenue."

Dean knew very little about either of the avenues referred to, though he had heard of them as tenanted by rich families. He rather congratulated himself that Brandon had not sought the place which was to be offered to him.

By this time they had reached the home of Squire Bates, and Dean followed Brandon into the house.

He soon found himself in the presence of the squire and of Peter Kirby.

"Good-evening, Dean," said the squire pleasantly. "This is my friend, Mr. Kirby.

"I have seen the young man before," said Kirby, opening his mouth in what he tried to make a pleasant smile.

"Yes, sir. I remember you."

Looking at Kirby as his future employer, Dean was not prepossessed in his favor. He was certainly far from an agreeable looking man, but Dean was disposed to judge him without prejudice. He knew that a fair outside sometimes accompanies very undesirable traits, and the reverse might also be the case.

"If you read my note, you understand that Mr. Kirby is in want of a young man, or boy, to assist him in the capacity of clerk or private secretary," the squire put in.

"I hope I may suit you, sir," said Dean earnestly, addressing himself to Peter Kirby.

"Oh, I am not very hard to suit. If a boy does his duty, and studies my interests, he won't find me a hard master."

"I think I can promise that I will serve you faithfully, sir."

"Is your uncle willing to have you leave home?" asked the squire.

Dean made the same answer as he had done to Brandon.

"Then there will be no difficulty there.

"How soon would you like to have me begin,

sir; that is, if you are willing to engage me?"

"Well, you can report at French's Hotel on Saturday—day after to-morrow. I suppose you can find your way to New York alone?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I have never been there, but I am sure I shall have no difficulty."

"I will give the boy the necessary directions, Kirby," said Squire Bates. "He has a tongue in his head, and can ask questions."

"What salary do you expect, Master Dunham?" asked Kirby.

"I will leave that to you, sir."

"I am willing to pay a fair salary, say twenty-five dollars a month and your board and lodging thrown in. Will that be satisfactory?"

"It is more than I anticipated," said Dean, quite dazzled by the offer. He reckoned that he would be able to send some money home to his uncle and aunt every month—and thus have the pleasure of making up to some extent for the expense which they had incurred on his account.

"Then that matter is settled. Here is a card with my address on it. You will find me at French's Hotel at one o'clock in the day. If anything occurs to detain me, you can wait in the office till I return. My friend Bates here will supply money for your journey."

Dean understood that there was nothing more to be said, and he rose and took his leave. He went home in a fever of excitement, for he felt that he was about to enter the great world of which he had heard so much, and which he so earnestly longed to see.

CHAPTER XV.

DEAN MEETS AN ADVENTUROUS YOUNG MAN.

Adin Dunham and his wife were surprised and dazzled by the brilliant prospects of their nephew.

"Did this Mr. Kirby really agree to pay you twenty-five dollars a month, Dean?" asked the carpenter.

"Yes, uncle, and he asked if it would be satisfactory."

"It seems strange," mused Adin. "Why, when I was your age I was workin' for fifty cents a week and my board."

"I get board, too, Uncle Adin."

"It's a great offer. And you're a stranger to him too."

"Yes; he took me on Squire Bates's recommendation."

"I should have thought he'd have wanted the place for his own boy."

"Brandon would like to leave Waterford, but I don't believe he wants to work. It is all the better for me."

"I don't believe in boys being idle, but there's no

call for Brandon Bates to work if he don't want to. The squire's rich enough."

And then the carpenter's brow contracted in perplexity. He couldn't understand why a rich man should take what did not belong to him, and he had never got over the impression made on him on the day of the robbery by the long tusk-like teeth of the masked figure.

"Father," said Mrs. Dunham anxiously, "do you think it's safe for a boy as young as Dean to go out into the world alone? He's only a child."

"I'm almost sixteen, aunt," said Dean mortified.

"But you don't know nothin' of the world."

"Neither do you or I, wife, though we're both risin' sixty. Dean has got to take his chances. I hope this Kirby's a likely man. What does he look like, Dean?"

"Well, I don't fancy his appearance much," Dean admitted. "He is very dark and sallow, and there's something queer about the eyes. But I suppose he can't help his looks."

"Handsome is that handsome does," replied Mrs. Dunham. "I've heard tell that villains is sometimes very scrumptious in appearance."

"I guess he's all right, aunt. He didn't make himself, you know."

"I wish you hadn't got to go to New York alone, Dean. Don't you think Mr. Kirby'd wait a day, and then you could go with him?"

"I want to go alone, aunt. I hope I'm smart enough to find my way."

"We'll trust him, wife," said Adin Dunham. "He means we'll, and if he's keerful he'll come out all right."

At length the morning came for Dean's departure. He bade good-bye to the old folks, and walked proudly to the railroad station with a bundle of clothing under his arm.

Rather to his surprise he found Squire Bates at the little depot, walking up and down on the platform.

"So you're starting, are you, Dean?" said the squire.

"Yes, sir."

"I hope you'll do your duty by your employer."

"I shall try to do so, sir."

"I have indorsed you, and he has taken you on my recommendation."

"I ought to thank you for that, sir."

"I take it for granted that you will verify the good things I have said of you. If you don't—if you throw discredit on me and on your worthy uncle and aunt, why then—" and he paused.

Dean listened to hear how he would end the sentence.

"Then," resumed the squire, "I honestly advise you to stay away, and not return to Waterford."

"I won't come back unless I can come back with a good record," said Dean impetuously.

"A good resolution! Stick to it, my lad."

The train came up with a rush, and Dean got on board. He was a little disturbed by the squire's parting words. Why should he harp so much on Dean's acting discreditably?

"It almost seems as if he expected I would," soliloquized Dean. "If I know myself, I know that I am honest, industrious and faithful. Mr. Kirby won't be disappointed in me, unless he is an unreasonable man."

Waterford was about fifty miles from New York, and the journey consumed two hours. Dean was considerably interested in looking out of the window at the towns along the railroad. But besides this, he scanned the faces of the passengers around him.

Just behind him was a boy about his own age, who after a while leaned over and said, "Come back here and sit with me."

Dean was of a social disposition, and needed no second invitation.

His new acquaintance was a pleasant-looking boy of sixteen, with dark hair and dark eyes, and a bright, alert look.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To New York."

"Do you expect to stay there?"

"No, I am going to work for a gentleman whom I am to find at French's Hotel."

"Yes, I know where that is."

"Do you? Then you have the advantage of me. I was never in New York since I was a very little boy."

"Oh, it's easy enough to find it. We shall land at the Grand Central Depot. You can take a Fourth Avenue car in front of it, and it'll carry you right by French's Hotel."

"Is it far?"

"About three miles, I guess."

"That's a good distance."

"It isn't much in the city. I didn't know you had a place. I was going to ask you to join me."

"Why what are you going to do?" Dean asked in some curiosity.

"You won't give me away, will you?"

"What's that?"

"I mean you won't tell my plans to any one?"

"Not if you don't want me to."

"Then I'm going out West," said the boy, nodding impressively.

"You are! Have you got friends there?"

"No, I'm going in for a little excitement. I'm going out West to hunt Indians!" and the speaker eyed Dean to see how he was impressed by the declaration.

"But what good is that going to do you?" asked Dean, perplexed.

"Oh, there'll be no end of excitement. It'll show what I am made of. I shouldn't wonder if some writer would make a story out of my adventures."

"But suppose the Indians should hunt you?" suggested Dean.

"I must take my chance of that," answered the boy loftily. "If there wasn't any risk, there wouldn't be any excitement or glory."

"Are your folks willing you should go?" queried Dean.

"No; they don't know where I am. I left home on the sly."

"Won't they worry about you?"

"Just at first, but I shall write to them when I am far enough away. They'll be proud enough of me, when they read about my exploits. Maybe there'll be a play written about me. When I get home I shouldn't mind going round, playing in it myself. Have you got any money?"

"No, only my fare to New York and a quarter over."

"Then it would be no use for you to go with me. It'll take money to get out West, and to pay for a gun and ammunition. I shall get them at Chicago, I think."

"Have you considerable money with you?" Dean ventured to inquire.

"A little over a hundred dollars. You see I had that much in the Savings Bank. It's presents I've got from different persons in the last five years. I drew it all out a day or two since, and decided to start out in search of glory."

"I don't think you ought to go without letting your folks know about it," said Dean.

"Oh, they would oppose it, of course. They think I'm a baby, but I'm a year older than Daredevil Dick, the Young Hunter of the Rio Grande. I suppose you've read about him?"

"No, I never heard of him."

"I thought everybody had heard of him. I think I'm smart enough to do as much as he did."

Dean learned that his young companion's name was Guy Gladstone, and that his father was born in

England, but had come to America at an early age, and was a successful manufacturer. Guy would not tell him where his parents lived.

As their train ran into the depot, Guy said, "I guess I'll go to French's with you and stay one night. I shan't remain in the city any longer for fear my friends will track me."

CHAPTER XVI.

DEAN TAKES MR. KIRBY BY SURPRISE.

Dean found it to his advantage to have in his company one who was familiar with the city. Together he and Guy boarded a Fourth Avenue car and rode through Fourth Avenue into the Bowery, and later through Center Street.

Guy pointed out prominent buildings as they rode along, among them the Cooper Institute and Tombs Prison. Dean's interest was strongly excited.

"I should think you'd rather live here than go out West," he said.

"I'm sick of civilization," answered Guy rather grandly. "Give me the wild untrammeled life of the plains."

"But I don't see what it's going to lead to," objected Dean. "You can't make money out there."

"I'm not after money; I want glory," answered Guy.

"I prefer money," said Dean, "just at present."

They reached French's hotel, and entered. This was some years since, before the temporary closing of this old established house for travelers.

"You'd better go up to the register and see whether your friend has a room here," suggested Guy.

Dean adopted the suggestion, and looking over the record found this entry:

PETER KIRBY, Chicago. Room 197.

"Yes, he's here," he said in a tone of relief. "Is Mr. Kirby at home?" he inquired.

"I will send up and see," said the clerk. "Do you wish to go up at the same time?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll wait down here," said Guy. "If Mr. Kirby doesn't expect you to room with him, we can take a room together."

"Yes, I should like that."

Dean followed the bell boy upstairs to one of the upper floors. He had never been in a large hotel before, and as saw door after door opening on the corridor he thought the hotel must be one of the largest buildings in New York. In this, of course, he was very much mistaken.

"That's Mr. Kirby's room," said the bell boy, pointing to 197. "Shall I knock, or will you?"

"I'll go in; he expects me," answered Dean; and, with a want of ceremony which was the result of his inexperience, he did not stop to knock, but opened the door.

Sitting at a table was his employer, with a number of bank bills spread out before him, which he appeared to be engaged in counting. Naturally Dean glanced at them, and his surprise was great when he recognized the denomination of the bills.

They were all fifties! What could it mean? Was this man Kirby the one who had robbed his uncle? But his intimate relations with Squire Bates presented another explanation. The bills might have been received from the squire.

Dean's reflections were cut short by his employer.

With a look of alarm and annoyance he swept the bills together, and turning to Dean, said, harshly, "Why did you come in without knocking?"

"Excuse me!" said Dean, in a tone of apology, "I didn't think."

"It was positively rude," said Kirby in an excited tone. "One would know that you had been brought up in the country."

"I haven't been round much," said Dean, "but I hope to improve, especially if I travel about with you."

"There's no harm done," said Peter Kirby, cooling down rapidly, concluding that Dean had seen nothing to excite his suspicions; "but I was a little startled when you opened the door. It's dangerous for a man to be seen with money in a large city like this, for there are plenty of designing persons who might seek to relieve him of it."

"I hope you don't suspect me, Mr. Kirby."

"Certainly not. Well, you left Waterford this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is your luggage?"

"Here, sir," answered Dean, showing his bundle.

Kirby frowned.

"It will never do to travel with a bundle like that. You must have a valise. I haven't time to go round with you. Do you think you can be trusted to find a place where they are sold?"

"I have a friend who will go with me."

"What friend?" asked Kirby sharply.

"It's a boy I got acquainted with on the train—a boy about my own age, named Guy Gladstone."

"Oh, a boy!" repeated Peter Kirby, evidently relieved.

"He would like to have me occupy a room with him, unless you wish me to be with you."

"I have no objection; but mind, I shan't allow him to join our party and travel with us," said Kirby suspiciously.

"No; he would not care to. He is going out West at once."

"Alone?"

"Yes; he will only stay here one night."

"Here is a five-dollar bill. You can take it and look up a valise. Three or four dollars ought to buy one. A small one will answer, judging from the size of your bundle. I suppose you have had nothing to eat since you left Waterford?"

"No, sir."

"You can go to a restaurant and get some dinner. The other boy will show you where to find one. I am obliged to go out on business. This hotel is on the European system, and doesn't provide regular board."

"Shall I take my bundle with me, sir?"

"Yes; you can transfer the contents to the valise when you have bought one. When you return you can put your name on the hotel book, taking a room with this Guy Gladstone."

"Thank you, sir."

Dean descended to the office and communicated to Guy what his employer had told him.

"I have put my valise in the baggage-room," said Guy, and got a check for it. I am glad you are going to take a room with me. I wish you would join me altogether."

"Then you'd have to pay expenses for both, as I have no money."

"That would be an objection, as I have only about enough money for my own use."

The two boys went out together, but, both being hungry, decided to postpone purchasing the valise until after dinner. They went into a restaurant on Fulton Street, and ordered a dinner at moderate cost, which they enjoyed with great relish. They were of an age to have a hearty appetite.

"It seems strange to me to be eating here," said Dean. "I never before ate at a hotel or restaurant."

"Your life must have been very quiet," said Guy.

"Yes; but I expect to have some excitement now."

"In what business is your employer?"

"I don't know," answered Dean.

Guy regarded him with surprise.

"You are going to work for him, are you not?"

"Yes."

"And yet you don't know what business he is in?"

"No."

"What are you to do? Have you any idea?"

"I am to be private secretary, or clerk, I believe."

"Are you to get good pay?"

"Twenty-five dollars a month and my board," answered Dean proudly.

Guy looked amazed.

"That's a pretty steep salary to pay a green boy from the country. No offense, Dean. You are green, you know."

"Yes, I know I am, but I don't mean to stay so."

"I don't believe you will. You look as if you'd learn fast."

"I'll try to, at any rate."

After dinner they found a place near the corner of Wall Street and Broadway, where Dean bought a valise of neat appearance and good quality for three dollars. He adopted Mr. Kirby's suggestion, and, opening his bundle, put the contents into his new purchase.

"Now you don't look so countrified," said Guy.

They turned down Wall Street, looking curiously into the windows as they passed. At one—a broker's office—Dean found something to surprise him.

At a large counter stood Mr. Kirby with a roll of bills before him—the same, no doubt, that Dean had seen him counting at the hotel. He appeared to be purchasing government bonds, for a clerk passed him several, and gathered up the bills in exchange.

"What do you see that's so interesting?" asked Guy.

"That man at the counter is my employer."

"Humph! I don't like his looks. He seems to have plenty of money, though."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EVENING AT NIBLO'S.

"I WISH I knew whether that money I saw Mr. Kirby counting belonged to my poor uncle," thought Dean.

He didn't venture to take his boy friend into his confidence, for his suspicions, strong as they were, might prove to do his employer injustice. At any rate he resolved to keep on the lookout for additional evidence which might tend either to confirm or to disprove them.

If he had been present in the broker's office, he would have heard something to confirm the distrust he felt. When Peter Kirby was asked by the broker's clerk, as usual, his name, he hesitated for a second, then answered boldly "Renwick Bates." So in the broker's book the sale of bonds was recorded as having been made to Renwick Bates. Had the squire known this, he would have felt very angry with his confederate, as, in case the fifty-dollar notes were traced, his name would be involved.

Guy and Dean were taking supper at a restaurant not far from the hotel when Mr. Kirby came in and

sat down at a table near them. Guy was the first to notice him.

"There's your respected employer, Dean," he said in a low voice.

"So he is. I wonder whether I ought to speak to him."

"Wait till you get through supper."

Presently another man came in and took a seat at the same table. He seemed to have been expected.

"You're late, Pringle," said Kirby.

"Yes, I was detained. I went to Jersey City to see my wife."

"You are better provided than I. I have never found time to get married."

"Well, it's awkward sometimes in our business to have such an incumbrance."

"Does your wife know what business you are in?"

"Scarcely. She's a good church woman, and would be horrified. She thinks I am a traveling salesman."

Kirby laughed.

"I have no wife to deceive," he said. "That is where I have the advantage of you. However, you are no worse off than the captain. I've been up to see him."

"Where?"

"In the country," answered Kirby evasively. "He's a big gun out there. They call him squire."

Both laughed.

"So he is married?"

"Yes, and has a son who is his very image, even to the long, tusk-like teeth. If ever he gets into trouble it's because they will give him away."

"They certainly are very peculiar."

"They are dangerous," responded Kirby with emphasis. "If I had them I would get rid of them in short order, but the captain owned to me that he was afraid of the dentist."

"I suppose his family are in the dark as to his position?"

"Undoubtedy. His son is an impudent young cub. It would have given me pleasure to box his ears. He evidently thinks his father a man of great importance, and is inflated by his own estimate of his social consequence."

"What makes the captain stay in such an obscure place?

"He tells me it is on account of his family, and also because it adds to his safety."

"When are we to see him?"

"He will be in Chicago next month, and lay out work for us to do. One thing I will say for him, he has good executive talent, but he ought not to keep out of the way so much of the time."

Then the talk drifted into other channels.

To this conversation Dean listened with the utmost attention. He felt interested and excited. He could not fail to understand that Kirby was referring to Squire Bates. The mystery was deepening. Who and what was this man who in Oakford posed as a lawyer, a reputable citizen, and a Justice of the Peace?

It was clear that he was allied to some outside organization in which he wished to conceal his membership.

This man Kirby who was now Dean's employer, was a friend and associate. Why under the circumstancer should Squire Bates have been willing to send him off as Kirby's clerk or secretary? If there was anything to conceal, it was only giving him an opportunity to find it out.

"I must keep my eyes open," thought Dean. "I mean to find out who robbed my uncle, and whether Squire Bates had anything to do with it. If I could only recover the money I should be happy."

"What are you thinking about so intently?" asked Guy.

"I want to get out of the restaurant without my employer seeing me," answered Dean in a low voice.

"Why? Would he object to your coming here!"

"Wait till we get into the street."

The boys managed to effect their retreat without attracting the notice of Kirby or Pringle.

"Now what's it all about?" asked Guy.

"They were talking confidentially, and Mr. Kirby would be angry if he thought I had heard them."

"Oh, that's it," said Guy carelessly. He was not a boy of much curiosity, and felt much less interest in Dean's concerns than his own. "Well, what shall we do this evening?"

"Go to bed, I suppose."

"But why not go to some theater?"

"I should like to go," said Dean, "but I don't

know that I ought to use the money Mr. Kirby gave me for such a purpose."

"You needn't mind that. Didn't you tell me you were to receive twenty-five dollars a month?"

"Yes."

"Then if he makes any fuss, tell him to charge the expense of the theatre to your salary."

"I might do that. How much will it cost to go to the theater?"

"We can get a fair seat for fifty cents."

"Then I think I'll go," said Dean after some hesitation.

"Have you any choice as to theatres!"

"No, I don't know anything about them. I never went to a theatre in my life."

"Well, you are a fresh young countryman, and no mistake. Here, I'll get an evening paper, and see what's playing at the different theaters."

The result was that Niblo's was selected. It is not necessary to mention the name of the play, which was at that time a popular favorite, but is now forgotten. The two boys obtained seats in the balcony, rather far off from the stage, but both were possessed of good eyes, and had no difficulty in seeing what was passing on the boards.

Dean was enchanted. He had had but vague ideas of what a theater was like, and to him everything seemed real. There was one place where the villain of the piece throws the heroine from a bridge into the water. Dean uttered a little exclamation.

Guy turned to him with a smile.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I—I almost thought it was real," said Dean. "I was afraid she would drown."

"And I dare say you wanted to punish the brutal ruffian?"

"Yes, I did," admitted Dean.

"Probably he and the girl are excellent friends in real life. Why, they are husband and wife," he added, referring to the play bill.

"It doesn't seem possible."

"I envy you, Dean. You enjoy the play much better than I do, for you believe in it while I know it for a sham—that is, I know t's merely play-acting. Look in the next row—you see there is some one who believes in it as much as you do."

Guy pointed to a lady in plain, old-fashioned attire who was wiping her eyes.

"She takes it worse than you do," whispered Guy.

The play continued, and ended at last to the satisfaction of Dean, who saw all the bad characters visited with retribution, while oppressed innocence and virtue through much tribulation attained happiness and peace.

When the play was over, they joined the throng and passed out through the lobby. Suddenly a cry was heard from a little distance in front.

"I've been robbed! I've lost my pocket-book," and a small man with a red and excited face began to feel wildly in his pockets for his lost treasure.

At a little distance pushing their way out, were two

tall men, whom Dean recognized as Peter Kirby and his friend Pringle. While others in the immediate neighborhood of the victim were regarding him with looks of curiosity or sympathy these two seemed to feel no interest, and to be only intent on getting out into the street.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE FALL RIVER BOAT.

DEAN didn't see his employer till the next morning. Mr. Kirby did not ask him where he had spent the evening previous, as Dean thought it possible he might do. Indeed he seemed in unusual good spirits, and handed his new clerk a couple of dollars to defray any expenses he might incur.

"Are we going to stay long in New York?" Dean ventured to ask.

"No, we go to Boston this afternoon by the Fall River line."

This was a surprise to Dean, who fancied they were bound west.

When he suggested this, Mr. Kirby said, "I have a little business to transact in Boston first. We can go West from there as well as from New York."

Dean was not upon the whole sorry that he should have an opportunity of seeing a city so famous as Boston. "I shall feel that I am quite a traveler," he said to himself.

During the forenoon he was called upon to bid

good-bye to Guy Gladstone. That young man had concluded his arrangements for a visit to his Indian hunting grounds, and was in a hurry to leave New York, as he was liable at any moment to meet some friend of his father's who might detain him, or ask him questions which it would embarrass him to answer.

At about fifteen minutes to five o'clock Dean and his employer went down to the foot of Murray Street, and went on board the steamer Pilgrim of the famous Fall River line. Mr. Kirby succeeded in obtaining a stateroom, with two berths, and allowed Dean to occupy the upper one.

Our young hero surveyed with admiration the palatial accommodations of the great steamer; the grand saloon, the showy chandeliers, the handsome furniture and costly mirrors.

"You can amuse yourself as you please," said Kirby. "I shall be occupied till about ten o'clock, when I shall be ready to go to bed."

He showed Dean the way to the supper room, and told him he could take supper whenever he pleased. Dean availed himself of this permision, and after supper stopped at the book table in the main saloon, which was under the charge of a boy rather older than himself, arrayed in a blue uniform. This boy he found very social and agreeable. He learned that he was called Dan, but did not inquire his last name.

"Don't you get tired of traveling on the boat?" asked Dean.

"No."

"But it's the same thing every night."

"I have my business to attend to. That prevents it becoming monotonous."

"Are you ever sea-sick?"

"No," answered Dan with a smile. "It would take a good deal to upset me now, I'm so used to it."

"Do you expect to follow the business when you're a man?"

"No, I think I shall look for a place in a wholesale store in Boston next fall. It won't pay as well at first, but it will lead to a good salary in time. I suppose you are going to Boston?"

"Yes, but not to stay."

"How long do you stay there?"

"I don't know yet. That depends upon my employer."

"The man you are traveling with?"

"Yes."

"I noticed him. He is a tall, sallow man, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Have you been working for him long?"

"No, I've only just started."

"What do you do?"

"I am his private secretary—that's what he calls me, but I don't know yet what my duties will be."

"He don't look like a man likely to employ a private secretary," said Dan shrewdly.

"I don't know what sort of men do have secretaries," Dean said in a perplexed tone.

"Oh, governors, members of Congress, and sometimes authors. I don't suppose he's either of those three."

"I think not," answered Dean smiling.

"Well, he has a right to have one, at any rate. Do you like him?"

"I can't say I do, though I have nothing to complain of. He seems to be liberal."

"How much does he pay you, if you don't mind telling me?"

"Twenty-five dollars a month."

"And your expenses besides?"

Dean nodded.

"My, that's fine pay. I'd be a private secretary myself for that"

"If he wants two, I'll recommend you."

"You can tell all you know about me," said Dan laughing.

"That wouldn't be much, but I can judge of you by your looks."

"Thank you. I couldn't recommend your employer very highly on that ground."

Here two or three customers came up and inquired of the young news-agent about some of the latest novels. Dean, seeing that his friend was occupied, went to the after part of the boat, and seating himself on a camp stool watched with interest the progress of the vessel and the shores so far as they were visible. It was now dusk, and shadows played over the surface of the water.

Meanwhile where was Mr. Kirby?

After a hearty supper in the dining saloon he smoked a cigar on the lower deck, and then began to wander about the steamer, choosing especially the walk that ran between the outside staterooms and the side railing.

As he stood beside the railing a stout man looking like a prosperous merchant came out of his stateroom, and locked the door behind him. Then he passed through the nearest passage way into the saloon.

"He looks as if he might carry something of value," thought Kirby. "I'll venture to examine."

Waiting till the coast was clear he produced a pass key, of which he had managed to gain possession, and inserted it in the lock of stateroom No. 157, as we will venture to designate it.

The door opened, and Kirby entered the room.

He drew a match from his pocket, and lighting it looked swiftly and searchingly about him.

There was a small hand-bag on the lower berth.

"I'd take the bag if I dared, but it is too large to put in my pocket," thought Kirby. "Perhaps I can open it."

He drew from his pocket a bunch of keys of various sizes, and tried one after another. The fourth proved to fit.

The bag, when opened, displayed a variety of contents in which Kirby was not interested. But one article attracted his attention. This was a square pasteboard box with the name of Tiffany upon it.

"I'll take that at a venture," soliloquized Kirby. "Since it bears Tiffany's name the contents must be of

value. I won't stay any longer, for it might prove dangerous."

He relocked the bag, opened the door of the stateroom, and locking it again securely prepared to leave the spot.

He was only just in time, for the occupant of the stateroom appeared a minute later, accompanied by a younger man.

"Yes," Kirby heard him say. "I bought a watch for my daughter from Tiffany. I'll show it to you."

"A narrow escape!" murmured Kirby. "If he had found me in his stateroom, there would have been no end of a disturbance. I got through just in time."

Kirby went into the saloon, and taking out an evening paper began to read it attentively, or rather he appeared to, but out of the corner of his eyes he was watching for the return of the gentleman he had robbed.

He did not have long to wait. The two gentlemen came into the saloon, and one, the elder, seemed much excited.

"I tell you, Johnson," he said, "there are thieves on board. I left the watch in a pasteboard box in my hand bag less than half an hour since—indeed I think it is only fifteen minutes, and it has disappeared."

"Are you absolutely sure, Mr. Margrave?"

"Yes, for when I went to my stateroom, after coming up from the supper room, I opened the bag and saw that the box was there."

"And now it is gone?"

"Yes, you saw that yourself."

"But I don't see how, in the short time you were absent, any one could have got in and effected the robbery."

"Nor do I, but it was done."

"What shall you do about it?"

"Notify the officers of the boat, but I fear that won't do any good."

CHAPTER XIX.

DEAN BECOMES SUSPICIOUS.

Of course great excitement followed among the passengers. The two gentlemen went below, and soon returned with a quiet-looking man, not particularly noticeable except for a pair of keen, sharp eyes.

"That's the detective," whispered a traveling man whose business required him to make the journey between New York and Boston twice a week.

The two gentlemen and the detective went outside, and made an examination of the stateroom, but didn't find any traces of the lost watch.

"I'd like to be sure the article is really lost," said the detective. "On several occasions I have found that it was only mislaid. In the present instance there seems really to have been a robbery."

"There is no doubt of that," said Margrave ruefully.

"Did you notice any one loitering near the stateroom when you left it?"

"Yes, sir; I observed that a man was leaning over the rail."

"Ha! we are coming to something. Can you describe him?"

"I am afraid I cannot. You see I had no suspicion that any one was likely to rob me."

"Very natural, but rather disappointing! You didn't casually notice whether the man was short or tall, or how he was dressed?"

"I think he was tall, and dressed in dark clothing."

"I fear this is too general to afford much satisfaction. You see most of the men on board wear dark clothes."

"I see, Mr. Lynx, that I am not likely to recover the watch."

"Well, it is doubtful. Still, if you will give me a description of it I can quietly put it into the hands of the Boston police."

Mr. Margrave, at the suggestion of the detective, wrote out a description before he left the boat, and put it into his hands.

"I will keep my eyes open, Mr. Margrave," continued the detective, "and notice whether I recognize any professional thief among the passengers. I know many of those who operate in New York and Boston, and if I meet one of my old acquaintances shall take the liberty of examining him."

Fortunately for Peter Kirby the scene of his operations had been at the West, and though the detective regarded him with some suspicion, for criminals carry about with them a certain tell-tale look, he did not feel justified in arresting him. If Margrave had

been able to identify him as the man who had been loitering near the stateroom, of course that would have simplified matters.

It was not for some time that Dean heard what had happened. On re-entering the saloon, Dan, the young news agent, said to him :

"Where have you been?"

"Outside."

"Very suspicious. A gentleman occupying an outside stateroom has had his room entered and robbed."

"Is that true?" asked Dean in excitement.

"Yes, he made a great fuss about it. I saw him going out with the boat detective, but I don't think they found out anything."

Instantly Dean's mind reverted to the scene at the theater, and the loss of a pocket-book by one of the patrons of Niblo's. Was it possible that Mr. Kirby could be connected with both robberies? It really seemed that thefts took place wherever he went.

"What was taken?" he asked earnestly.

"A gold watch. The gentleman meant it for his daughter. I think it was bought at Tiffany's in New York."

"I was at a theater last evening," said Dean, "and as we were coming out a man ahead of us called out that he had been robbed of his pocket-book."

"Who do you mean by *us*—yourself and your employer?"

"No. A boy was with me—Guy Gladstone."

"Is he with you here?"

"No, he has gone out West to hunt Indians."

Dan, the news-agent, laughed.

"He'll be coming back soon without having seen an Indian, I have no doubt. I say, Dean, isn't it rather remarkable that there are robberies wherever you go?"

"Yes, it is singular," said Dean in a musing tone.

"It really looks suspicious," continued Dan. "However, you are my friend and I won't give you away."

"No, don't!" said Dean, accepting the joke in good humor.

Dean walked away, plunged in thought. Again he went outside, and walked round to an unfrequented part of the steamer. Suddenly he saw a man in front of him draw something from his pocket, and with a quick movement throw it far out upon the water. It was light enough to see that it was a white pasteboard box of small size.

Rather surprised, Dean scanned the person who had done this, and to his further astonishment recognized him as Mr. Kirby, his employer.

Turning quickly, Peter Kirby in his turn saw Dean's eyes fixed upon him, and he became irritated and alarmed.

"What are you out here for?" he demanded harshly.

"Why, is there any harm in being out here?" asked Dean surprised.

Kirby saw that he had made a false move, and that this unreasonable taking to task of Dean was likely to excite the boy's suspicions.

"No," he answered, calming down, "I don't know that there is any harm in being out here, but you might be imprudent and endanger your safety."

"How, Mr. Kirby?"

"I was once on board a steamer like this, when a boy about your age came out, got up on the rail, and by a sudden movement of the steamer was thrown into the water. The poor fellow was drowned."

"I shan't imitate his example," said Dean. "I think he was very foolish."

"Well, I haven't found out yet whether you are prudent or imprudent. I haven't known you long enough. I thought it best to warn you, however."

"Thank you, sir."

"I am going into the saloon, but if you care to remain outside I have no objection as long as you are careful. I feel a certain responsibility about you, as you are not used to traveling."

"Thank you, sir."

Dean would have been more grateful if he had believed what Mr. Kirby was saying, but, young and inexperienced though he was, he did not take much stock in the sudden interest shown in him. He had not noticed that Mr. Kirby felt any particular solicitude about him in New York, though there were plenty of scrapes that he might have got into there.

Peter Kirby went back into the saloon, and soon

after Dean followed. He again sought the book table.

"Well," said Dan, pleasantly, "have you found out the robber?"

Dean shook his head.

"Do you know, or did you hear, whether the stolen watch was in a box?" he asked.

"Yes, I heard Mr. Margrave say that it was in a white pasteboard box. Have you found the box?"

"No," answered Dean. He did not feel at liberty to tell what he had seen, but it confirmed him in the idea that his employer, Peter Kirby, was the robber of the stateroom.

At ten o'clock Mr. Kirby came up to him.

"It is ten o'clock," he said. "I think you had better go to bed."

"All right, sir."

Kirby led the way into the stateroom.

"I shall give you the top berth," he said. "You are younger, and can climb up there more easily than I."

"I shall be satisfied with either," said Dean.

Both went to bed and Dean was soon asleep.

Towards morning he thought it must be when he woke up. The light was burning, and peeping out from behind the curtains he saw that Kirby was standing in the stateroom with something in his hand which he was examining with evident satisfaction. Dean's heart gave a sudden bound, when he recognized this object as a beautiful gold watch of small pattern. He laid back his head on the pillow, but the

slight noise attracted the attention of Kirby, who looked up to where his boy companion was lying.

"Pshaw! he's fast asleep!" he heard Kirby mutter, "but I must be cautious, as, if he saw this watch, he might suspect something."

CHAPTER XX.

MR. KIRBY WRITES A LETTER FOR EFFECT.

ANY lingering doubts Dean might have were of course dissipated by the sight of the watch. It was evident that his employer was a professional thief and pickpocket. The question arose, ought he or ought he not to expose and denounce him?

Should he do so he would find himself adrift, without money or situation. Moreover, he would lose the chance of proving Kirby the accomplice of Squire Bates in the robbery of his uncle. On the whole, he decided to wait, and conceal from Kirby the knowledge that he had acquired concerning him.

Kirby remained but a day in Boston. What business he attended to Dean didn't know. He was left to his own devices, and managed to see Boston Common, Bunker Hill Monument, and to ride out on a Washington Street line of cars to Roxbury. Late in the evening he started for Chicago with Mr. Kirby, and two days later the two registered at the Commercial Hotel, corner of Lake and Dearborn Streets. Dean enjoyed the journey. He caught sight of the

famous falls of Niagara, and would like to have stopped for a few hours there to see the cataract at his leisure, but of course didn't venture to make such a request of Mr. Kirby, who, as he knew, was traveling for his own purposes, not for the gratification of his private secretary.

They reached Chicago in the morning and took breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast Kirby said, "Come out with me, Dean; I will show you a little of the city."

Dean accepted the invitation with alacrity.

The two walked through some of the principal thoroughfares. Dean was impressed by the large and handsome buildings everywhere to be seen in the business portions of the city. Finally they turned into a minor street, lined with smaller and less pretentious structures.

Peter Kirby halted at last before a pawnbroker's office, with the three golden balls displayed above the entrance.

"Oh, by the way, Dean," said Kirby, suddenly, "I am a little short of money, and must borrow some on an article I don't need at present."

"Yes, sir?" said Dean, inquiringly.

"This is a pawnbroker's office. Take this watch, and ask the pawnbroker to lend you twenty-five dollars on it. You can give him your own name, and for address you may say Buffalo."

"But I don't live in Buffalo."

"That doesn't matter. He will be more apt to let you have the money if he thinks you came from a

distance. It isn't necessary to give the correct address."

Mr. Kirby drew from his pocket the gold watch which Dean had seen in the stateroom of the Pilgrim, and which he was sure had been stolen from the elderly gentleman who had complained of being robbed.

Dean started and flushed, as Kirby held the watch in his hand.

"Is that your watch?" he asked.

"No; it belongs to my wife. I shall redeem it before I return East. If the pawnbroker won't give you twenty-five dollars, get as much as you can. You look like a boy sharp at a bargain. Say that it belonged to your uncle."

"Mr. Kirby," said Dean, "I would rather not do what you ask me."

"What do you mean?" demanded Kirby, angrily.

"What I say. I would rather not pawn that watch for you."

"Look here, boy," said Kirby, roughly, "are you aware that you are behaving in a very foolish, not to say impudent manner?"

"I have my reasons for declining," said Dean.

"Why do you think I pay you wages?" asked Kirby, frowning.

"I understood that I was to be your private secretary."

"And a mighty easy place you have had so far!"

"That is true, sir."

"This is almost the first thing I have asked you to do, and you refuse."

"I told you that I had my reasons for it," said Dean, resolutely, though his look was troubled.

"The boy suspects me," thought Kirby. "It is time I got rid of him."

"We will discuss this matter hereafter," he said quietly. "We shall have to come to an understanding. Stay here till I come out."

He went into the pawnbroker's, and in less than five minutes returned with a roll of bills.

"It appears that I have to do my own work, though you are in my employ," he said with a sneer.

Dean didn't reply. He began to suspect that he would not long retain the place which he at present filled. He resolved to look about him, and if he saw anywhere a chance to get into the employ of some one else to take advantage of it. In a money way he might not do so well, but he did not wish to remain connected any longer than he could help with a man of Mr. Kirby's character.

At the Commercial Hotel, Dean and his employer occupied the same room. They remained in the Lake City for a week.

Dean's labors were very light, being confined to the writing of four letters, one of which is subjoined as a specimen. It was addressed to a certain John Carver, of San Francisco. It ran thus:

DEAR SIR:

You may sell out the two hundred shares of mining stock which you hold of mine as soon as a satisfactory price can be obtained. I think I ought to get

twenty dollars per share, but will accept eighteen if you think it best. The amount you can deposit to my credit in the Bank of Nevada.

Yours truly,

PETER KIRBY.

Kirby watched Dean's face when he was writing this letter. It was intended for effect simply, and to dispel the suspicions of his young secretary. But Dean had been gaining rapidly in knowledge of the world, and especially in the knowledge of his employer, and he had little belief in his mining property.

"How much do you think that mining stock cost me, Dean?" said Kirby, in a confidential tone.

"I couldn't guess, sir."

"Four dollars and a quarter per share. How much would that be on two hundred shares?"

"Eight hundred and fifty dollars."

"Correct! I see you are quick at figures. Now, even if I sell at eighteen, and I am certain to get that, I shall make a very tidy profit. Let me see, it would foot up thirty-six hundred dollars—a profit of twenty seven hundred, allowing the extra fifty for broker's commission."

"Are you going to San Francisco, Mr. Kirby?" asked Dean.

"I may; I am not quite sure. It is a lucky city for me. Whenever I go there I make money."

Dean could not help wondering whether he made it in the same way as on the Fall River boat.

"I have been rather short of money lately," continued Mr. Kirby, "because I was not willing to sell out my shares except at the top of the market. However I think I may venture to sell now."

Dean made no comment. He did not believe that Kirby owned any mining shares at all.

"Shall I mail the letter for you, Mr. Kirby?" asked the young secretary.

"No; I shall be going out myself," answered his employer. "You may hand me the letter when you have put it in the envelope."

Kirby carelessly dropped the letter into his pocket, and when Dean was out of the way he destroyed it. It was never intended to be mailed.

"The boy looks skeptical," said Kirby to himself, as he sent Dean to the office to buy a postage stamp. "It isn't easy to pull the wool over his eyes. I must get rid of him, and that soon."

CHAPTER XXI.

DEAN BECOMES HIS OWN MASTER.

Two days later Dean and his employer reached a small town in Iowa which we will call Clifton. They passed the night at the American Hotel, and occupied a room with two beds. Kirby rose first in the morning, and went out, leaving Dean asleep.

When the boy awoke he rose and dressed himself. He was putting on his coat when he noticed an open letter addressed to Kirby which had fallen on the floor. Dean picked it up, and was about to put it away to return to Kirby, when his eye caught the postmark "Waterford" and the signature Renwick Bates.

Though under ordinary circumstances Dean would not have felt justified in reading a letter not addressed to himself, the peculiar circumstances, and the suspicion he entertained relative to the share these two men probably had in the robbery of his uncle, decided him to take advantage of the opportunity which presented itself to him of acquiring some information on the subject.

This was the letter which Dean read with an interest that may be imagined :

FRIEND KIRBY :

I have not received the government bonds which you purchased with the bills I gave you to dispose of. How did you send them? I cannot understand how such a package could have miscarried if properly addressed and forwarded with suitable precautions. I shall hold you responsible for them, and say emphatically that I regard the failure to reach me as something strange and mysterious. I do not like to express distrust, but I require you to send me the receipt of the express company to whom you committed the package.

In regard to the boy Dean you understand my wishes. I don't wish him to return to Waterford. It will be easy to get him into trouble at such a distance from home that he will find it hard to get back. You can write me a letter which I can show at my discretion to his friends, which will discredit any stories he may invent about you or myself.

RENWICK BATES.

Dean read this letter with eager interest. He felt that it would be a formidable proof against Squire Bates, and he carefully concealed it in his inside vest pocket.

"So Mr. Kirby means to get me into trouble," he soliloquized. "I shall have to be on my guard."

Dean went below and took breakfast, not being in

the habit of waiting for his employer. Mr. Kirby entered the breakfast-room as he was leaving it.

"We take the ten o'clock train," he said briefly. "Don't leave the hotel."

"All right, sir, I'll stay in the office."

At ten o'clock they stepped on board a Western bound train. Dean feared that Kirby would miss his letter, and make inquiries about it, but its loss appeared not to have been discovered. They took seats, and the train started. Dean caught Kirby regarding him with a peculiar gaze, and it made him uneasy. Was he devising some plot, of which Dean was to be the victim?

Two hours later the train had traversed fifty miles. The train boy came through the car, carrying a supply of the latest novels. Kirby was not in general much of a reader, but on this occasion he stopped the boy and looked over his books.

"I think I will take this book," he said, selecting a Pinkerton detective story.

"I sell a good many of that series," said the boy glibly.

Kirby put his hand into his pocket, and withdrew it with a startled expression.

"I can't find my pocket-book," he said.

Several of the passengers looked round, and apprehensively felt for their own wallets.

"When did you have it last, sir?" asked an old gentleman in the next seat.

"At the Clifton railroad station, sir. I bought tickets there."

"Are you sure you put back the wallet into your pocket?"

"Yes, I am positive."

"There must be a pickpocket on the train then."

"But I haven't exposed myself," said Kirby puzzled. "I took my seat here, with my boy, and have not stirred since."

"Your son, I suppose?"

"No; he is a boy in my employ."

"Humph!" said the old man, eying Dean dubiously.

"You don't mean that you suspect him of taking it?" said Kirby in a low tone.

Dean heard these words, and he exclaimed indignantly. "I am not a thief, if that is what the gentleman means."

"Of course not," said Kirby soothingly—"Still, just to convince him now, you may as well search your pockets."

Dean thrust his hand into his right pocket (he wore a sack coat) and it came in contact with something unexpected. He drew it out, with the lost pocket-book in it.

"Is it possible?" ejaculated Kirby.

"Just what I thought!" said the old man, nodding emphatically.

"I wouldn't have believed it," said Kirby.

"Mr. Kirby," said Dean, his face flaming with indignation, "do you mean to charge me with taking that pocket-book?"

"What else can I think? Oh, Dean, I am grieved to find you dishonest."

"I know nothing of how it came into my pocket," said Dean hotly, "but I suspect."

"What do you suspect?"

"That you put it there to get me into trouble."

"You hear him!" said Kirby, turning to the old man.

"What shameless effrontery!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I don't know what the world is coming to. Have you ever missed anything before, sir?"

"Two or three articles of jewelry," answered Kirby, "but it never occurred to me to suspect the boy."

"It seems pretty clear now."

"Yes, I should say so."

Meanwhile Dean, with flushed and angry countenance, looked from one face to another, but everywhere he met looks of distrust. It was clear that the majority of the passengers believed him guilty. He understood now the nature of the plot against him, and the letter in his pocket would be a sufficient proof of it. But he did not wish to produce it. He chose rather to keep it on account of the evidence which it contained against Squire Bates.

"What shall you do about it?" asked the old gentleman, who seemed to feel particularly hostile against Dean.

"I don't know," answered Kirby hesitating.

"The boy ought to be punished. If it were *my* case, I would have him arrested."

"No, I don't care to do that. He belongs to a respectable family."

"Surely you won't keep him in your employ?"

"No, I shall feel compelled to discharge him. Dean, you can leave the car at the next station. You are no longer in my employ. For the sake of your uncle and aunt, I shall not have you arrested, but I must decline to employ you any longer."

"Very well, sir!" answered Dean. "If you will pay me what you owe me for services, I will leave you."

"Pay you what I owe you!" replied Kirby, as if surprised.

"Yes, si ; you promised me twenty-five dollars per month, and I have been with you three weeks."

"You have received money from me at different times, and I owe you nothing. Besides, the jewelry which you have taken will amount to more than your wages."

"Mr. Kirby, I have taken no jewelry, and you know it."

"How can you tolerate the boy's impudence?" said the old man.

Kirby shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been very much deceived in him," he answered, "but I cherish no revengeful feelings. I hope he may see the error of his ways, and resolve to lead an honest life."

"You are too merciful, sir."

"It may be so, but he is young, and there is hope of his repentance."

"Mr. Kirby, do I understand that you wish me to leave you?" asked Dean.

"Yes. You had better get out at the next station. Here is a dollar. I don't want to leave you altogether penniless. Of course I must report what has happened to Squire Bates, who stood sponsor to you."

The train began to slow up, for the next station was near at hand.

"I don't want the dollar," said Dean. "I understand your object in accusing me of theft. I could clear myself now if I chose, but I am willing to wait."

Dean rose from his seat, and with flushed cheeks and head erect walked to the end of the car, and stepped out on the platform. He stood there, and watched the departure of the train, bearing his late employer farther West. He did not even know the name of the station at which he had disembarked.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FRIEND—IN NEED.

The suddenness with which Dean found himself cast adrift, and thrown upon his own resources, was enough to take away his breath. As merchants from time to time take account of stock, he felt that it would be wise now that he was about to set up for himself to ascertain the extent of his means.

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out a small collection of silver coins and pennies. All told he found he had but sixty-seven cents, and he was probably twelve hundred miles from home. The chances were that it would cost him at least three cents a mile, or thirty-six dollars, to get back to Waterford. He would have been glad to have the thirty-six dollars, but he had no intention of going back until he could carry something with him. He did not want to acknowledge that he had made a failure.

Dean ascertained that the town in which he was

stranded (for he hadn't money enough to get out of it) was Granville. The village appeared to be half a mile away, and might at a rough guess contain a thousand inhabitants. Like most small Western towns, it consisted of one main street, with short side streets opening out of it. For a place of the size it seemed to be wide awake, and enterprising, more so than a village of corresponding population at the East.

After spending a few minutes at the depot Dean took his valise, and trudged on in the direction of the town. What he should do when he got there he hardly knew. He was ready for anything that might turn up, and he did not worry as much as he would if he had been twice as old.

Dean had accomplished about half the distance when a voice hailed him, "Halloa, youngster!"

Dean turned in the direction of the voice and his glance fell on a man of perhaps twenty-five, who was stretched comfortably under a tree by the roadside. He had a knapsack and wore a velveteen suit. Something in his appearance gave Dean the impression that he was an actor.

Responding to his greeting, which was accompanied by a pleasant smile, Dean answered "Good day!"

"Where are you traveling, young chap?"

"I don't know," responded Dean. "I suppose I am on my way to the village."

"Do you live about here?"

"No, I live in New York State."

"So do I, when I'm at home, but I'm not often at home."

"Are you an actor?"

"That's what I call myself. That's what I am styled by admiring friends, though some of the critics are unkind enough to express doubts. At present I am in hard luck. I came West with a dramatic company which has gone to pieces. I am traveling homeward on my uppers. Permit me to introduce myself, and he doffed a soft hat which he wore, "as Cecil Montgomery, not wholly unknown to the metropolitan stage."

There was something attractive in his good-humored recklessness that impressed Dean favorably.

"My name is Dean Dunham," he responded, "not known on any stage."

"Excuse the impertinence, but are you a young man of fortune?"

"Yes, if you call sixty-seven cents a fortune."

"Dean, my boy, you have ten cents the advantage of me. If you have any plans that with our united capital we may be able to carry out, my wealth is at your service."

"I have no plans except to get something to eat," said Dean.

"I am with you there," said the actor, rising with alacrity from his recumbent position. "Know you of a hostelry?"

"If that means a restaurant, I think we may find one in the village."

"Wisely guessed. If you have no objection to my company, we will walk together."

"I shall be glad of your company, Mr. Montgomery."

"You do me proud, Mr. Dunham," and the actor once more doffed his hat, and bowed low. "If you don't mind, my boy, suppose you tell me what brings you out here, so far from home? I came with a combination, as I have explained."

"I came as private secretary with a gentleman—no, a man named Kirby. He chose to charge me with stealing his pocket-book, and discharged me on the train, refusing to pay me back wages."

"Steal—with that honest face! Why, I'd trust you with my entire wealth—fifty-seven cents—and wouldn't lose a minute's sleep."

"Thank you," said Dean, smiling. "I hope I deserve your confidence."

"So it seems that we are both in very much the

same plight. We must hustle for a living. I wish you were an actor."

"Why?"

"We might give a joint performance, and so pick up a few pennies. Can you play on any instrument?"

Dean drew a harmonica from his pocket and displayed it.

"I can play a little on this," he said.

"Give us a taste of your quality."

Dean put the harmonica in his mouth and played several popular airs in very creditable style. He had practiced considerably in Waterford, and when he left home chanced to bring his favorite instrument with him.

Mr. Montgomery applauded vociferously.

"That's capital!" he said. "I have an idea. Our fortune is made."

"Is it? I'm very glad to hear it."

"Let me explain. I am a dramatic Jack of all trades. I can sing, dance, recite, and give imitations. Why shouldn't we give a joint exhibition? I venture to say we can charm and astonish the good people of Granville, and gather in golden shekels for ourselves."

"But what am I to do?"

"Listen. You are the world-renowned Dean

Dunham, the champion player on the harmonica, who have charmed tens of thousands, and whose name is a household word from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Do you understand?"

"I shall begin to think I am a humbug."

"So be it! Humbug makes money and rides at ease, while modest merit goes barefoot and tramps over dusty roads."

"That is complimentary to us, for it happens to be our condition just at present."

"Then let us abandon it! It doesn't pay. Will you join me, and try your luck with the good people of Granville?"

Dean hesitated a moment, but only a moment. He must do something, and nothing else seemed to present itself. If any one chose to pay for the privilege of hearing him play on the harmonica, he had no objection to receiving the money. Besides, he would be at no trouble in the matter. Mr. Montgomery would make all arrangements, and he would only have to take the part that might be assigned him.

"I am at your service, Mr. Montgomery."

"Your hand on it! We will, we must be successful. In after years, when fame and money are yours, think that it was I, Cecil Montgomery, who assisted you to make your début."

"I certainly will, Mr. Montgomery," said Dean, falling into his companion's humor.

By this time they had reached the village. A sign over a small one-story building attracted their attention.

RESTAURANT
AND
COFFEE HOUSE.

"Let us enter," said the actor. "It is astonishing what an appetite I have. If we are to give an entertainment we must be fed."

Fortunately the prices at the restaurant and coffee house were very moderate, and the two travelers were able to make a plentiful meal, though it reduced their stock of money almost to nothing. After dinner Mr. Montgomery indulged in a five cent-cigar, but Dean declined to smoke.

"Stay here, Dean," said his companion. "I hear there is a weekly paper published in Granville. I will see the editor, and ask him to join us in the speculation, sharing the profits. The paper appears to-morrow. He can give us a big puff that will insure our success."

"Suppose he won't do it?"

"Leave it to me! I have a most persuasive tongue. Granville must not let such an opportunity

slip. It must hear me act and listen to your melodious strains."

Nearly an hour passed. Then Montgomery came back radiant. "It's all fixed," he said. "You make your début to-morrow evening. I have engaged board at the hotel for us both."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEAN'S DEBUT.

THE next morning the *Granville Weekly Palladium* appeared, containing a flaming notice of the forthcoming entertainment, in which the merits of the two performers were extolled in the highest terms. Dean opened his eyes in amazement when he read the following tribute to himself:

At immense expenses the service of

DEAN DUNHAM

the Champion Harmonica player of America have been secured. This young performer, still only a boy in years, will spend the next season in Europe, having been offered engagements in London, Paris and Vienna, and he is now playing a farewell series of engagements in his native land. Probably the citizens of Granville may never again have the opportunity of hearing him.

"What do you say to that, Dean, my boy?" asked Montgomery, nudging him in the side.

"It makes me feel foolish, Mr. Montgomery," said Dean, blushing. "If it should be read in Waterford the people would never get through laughing at me."

"They won't read it, my boy, unless it turns out true."

"Turns out true?"

"Yes. I believe you can win popularity by your playing. We can tell better this time to-morrow. If you do, how can we tell but the rest may also come true?"

"If it were the violin or the banjo! But a little cheap harmonica!"

"Never mind what the instrument is if you know how to handle it. Now let me tell you one thing that will encourage you: I think we are going to have a big house."

"What makes you think so?"

"There hasn't been an entertainment in Granville for several weeks. The people are hungry to be amused. They patronize performances like ours much better in the West than at the East. There the people are more humdrum and steady going. Here they are more excitable. Now I am going to give you a hint. Take a walk out into the woods, or any-

where where you will be alone, and practice popular songs. I want you to make a sensation this evening."

"It seems ridiculous, my playing for money!"

"How much money have you in your pocket?"

"Five cents."

"Then it strikes me it would be more ridiculous *not* playing for money. Whatever talents we possess our Creator meant us to exercise for our benefit and the pleasure of the community."

"At any rate I'll do my best."

"Then you'll do all I ask. By the way, I am going to have you take the tickets this evening, up to the time of the performance. It will save money, and draw public attention."

"I can do that, at any rate."

During the forenoon Dean went to a secluded place a mile from the village, and began to practice on the harmonica. He had a quick ear, and was really an excellent performer. He was unaware that he had an audience till a boy attracted his attention peeping from behind a tree at a little distance.

Dean nodded and smiled, and the boy was encouraged to come forward.

"Are you Dean Dunham, the boy that's going to be at the concert?" asked the young auditor, bashfully.

"Yes."

"How long have you played?"

"Four or five years."

"How old are you?"

"Almost sixteen."

"What lots of money you must have made!"

Dean smiled. He thought it most prudent not to speak definitely on this point. He was rather curious to know what the boy thought of his playing.

"Can you play on the harmonica?" he asked.

"Only a little. Of course I can't play like you."

"Do you like my playing, then?"

"You play bully."

Dean was gratified, not so much out of vanity, as because it encouraged him to think that others also might regard his performance with favor.

"I am glad you like it," he said. "Are you going to the entertainment this evening?"

"I should like to," said the boy, wistfully, "but I don't have much money to spend. I have to work for a living."

"He little thinks that I am worse off than he," thought Dean. "He has a home, while I am over a thousand miles from mine, and with only five cents in my pocket."

"It won't cost you anything to come in," he said

in a friendly manner. "I shall be at the door, and I will let you in free."

"Will you, really?" queried the boy, overjoyed.

"Certainly I will. I shall remember your face. If I don't, just remind me of my promise."

As a matter of business, Dean's offer of a free ticket proved a stroke of policy. The boy spread among his comrades a highly colored report of Dean's wonderful performance on the harmonica, and the result was a large attendance of young people in the evening.

When Dean took his place at the door he found himself the object of many wondering and curious glances, and he was at first abashed; but finally, reminding himself that he was among strangers who were disposed to look upon him as a genius, he accommodated himself to the position, and applied himself assiduously to his duties.

The hall in which the entertainment was to take place contained about four hundred people. When eight o'clock struck it was packed, many having come from neighboring towns. The price of admission was thirty-five cents for adults, and twenty-five for children. It was clear, therefore, that the receipts must be considerably over a hundred dollars. The rent of the hall being but ten dollars, this allowed a large margin for profit.

Punctually at eight o'clock the entertainment commenced with a brief introductory speech from Mr. Montgomery.

"Gentlemen and ladies," he said, "it has long been the desire of Mr. Dunham and myself to appear in your beautiful village, and at length our wishes are to be gratified. We shall do our utmost to please you, and if we fail, think that it is our ability and not our will that is lacking. I will commence with a humorous recitation, in the character of an old darky."

He disappeared behind the screen, and emerged in a very short time disguised as a Southern negro.

This impersonation hit the popular taste. It was followed by a song, and then Mr. Montgomery introduced Dean in a highly flattering manner.

Dean appeared with a flushed face, and a momentary feeling of trepidation. Making a bow to the audience, he struck up the favorite melody of the day. He really played very well, the excitement of playing before an audience helping rather than interfering with him, and his performance was greeted with hearty and long continued applause. At Mr. Montgomery's suggestion he gratified the audience with an encore. Among those who applauded loudest was the boy to whom he had given free admission.

"You have done yourself proud, Dean, my boy," said Montgomery, when Dean retired behind the screen. "Our entertainment is a success. Our audience is good-natured."

"I can't help thinking how the folks at home would be surprised if they knew I was performing in public," said Dean, smiling.

"And making money out of it. That's where the best part comes in. Follow up your success, my boy. I shall go out twice and then call on you again."

The next time Dean appeared with confidence, being satisfied that the audience were friendly. His second appearance was equally satisfactory, and he was compelled to blush when he overheard one school-girl on the front row of benches whisper to another, "Isn't he sweet?"

"It seems to me I am learning a good deal about myself," thought Dean. "I must take care not to get conceited."

The dual entertainment lasted about an hour and a half, Mr. Montgomery of course using up the lion's share of the time. At last it concluded, and Dean and his companion gathered up the money and went home. The profits over and above expenses amounted to eighty dollars, of which the editor, according to the agreement, received forty per cent, or

thirty-two dollars. The remainder, forty-eight dollars, was divided equally between Dean and Mr. Montgomery. As the hotel charge was but a dollar a day for each, they felt handsomely compensated for their exertions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DEAN LOSES HIS PARTNER.

When the two partners returned to the hotel with the proceeds of the entertainment in their pockets, they were in high spirits.

"I feel as rich as Vanderbilt," said Montgomery in exultation.

"And I feel like an Astor or a Gould," chimed in Dean. "Peter Kirby did me a good turn when he discharged me."

"Dean, you are star! I had no idea of your talent."

"Don't flatter me, Mr. Montgomery," said Dean blushing. "You will make me self-conceited. I was lucky in falling in with you."

"Well said, my boy! I see you don't grudge me my share of the credit. We will keep on, will we not?"

"As long as there is any money in it."

"Precisely. Your hand on that."

In pursuance of this agreement, three evenings later they gave an entertainment in the town of Cameron, twenty miles away. Circumstances were not as favorable, but they divided twenty dollars net profits.

"We mustn't complain of that, Dean," said his companion. "It isn't as much, to be sure, as we made at Granville."

"But it seems to me ridiculously large for the little I did, Mr. Montgomery."

"You are modest, Dean. That is not artistic. You must set a proper value on your talent."

"I think I do," said Dean, smiling. "I feel very much like a humbug, Mr. Montgomery. A young lady came up to me last evening and asked me if I had played before any of the crowned heads of Europe, and if I were personally acquainted with Queen Victoria."

"I hope you told her you were."

"No, Mr. Montgomery, I shouldn't be willing to tell such a falsehood."

"All business, my dear boy, all business! We must blow our own trumpets if we want to be appreciated. By the way, what did you tell her?"

"That I had not yet played before the queen, but should I go to England, and could arrange to do so, I would."

"Very good! You kept up appearances. What did she say?"

"She asked me if I would get her Queen Victoria's autograph, in that case. She also asked me for my own. I promised her the queen's if I were able to obtain it."

"Didn't she ask for *my* autograph?" asked Mr. Montgomery, with a twinge of professional jealousy.

"She said she was going to ask you for it."

"I shall be glad to gratify her," said Montgomery, condescendingly. "I am often asked for an autograph."

"That was my first application," said Dean smiling.

"You are not as old as I. Long before you are, your autograph will be in demand."

For three weeks the combination continued to give entertainments, arranging from two to three a week. They did not again meet with the success which had greeted them at Granville, but in almost every case they made expenses, and a fair sum besides. At the end of this time, each of the partners found himself possessed of about forty dollars.

At the close of a concert at a small town in Missouri, on returning to the hotel, Mr. Montgomery chanced to take up a copy of the New York *Herald*

in the office. He ran over the advertisements on the first page, including the "Personals," when all at once his color changed, and he looked agitated.

"What's the matter, Mr. Montgomery?" asked Dean.

"Bad news, my boy!" said the actor sadly. "Look at that!"

Dean read the following among the personals:

CECIL MONTGOMERY, JR. Come home at once! Your mother is very sick.

"My poor old mother!" said the actor feelingly. "She may be dead by this time. Why couldn't I have seen this notice before?"

"What is the date of the paper?" asked Dean.

"It is five days old."

"I suppose you will go at once."

"Yes, I must. I never would forgive myself if I did not hurry home on the chance of seeing the dear old mother once more."

"You are right, Mr. Montgomery. I would do the same if I were fortunate enough to have a mother living."

"Of course that ends our partnership for the present. Will you go home with me, Dean?"

Dean shook his head.

"No, I have nothing to go home to. It would

take all my money, and there would be nothing for me to do in Waterford."

"But you can't give entertainments alone."

"I can make my living somehow. I have forty dollars, and that would last me some time even if I got nothing to do."

When Dean bade his companion good-bye at the station the next morning, and turned away, a forlorn feeling came over him, and he felt tempted to take the next train East himself. But the thought of going back to Waterford as poor as he started, and with no prospect of employment, braced him up, and he resolved to push on westward and take his chances. He returned to the hotel, and sat down to consider his plans.

There a pleasant surprise awaited him.

"There's a gentleman to see you, Mr. Dunham," said the clerk.

"Where is he?" asked Dean.

"He went out to make a call in the village but will be back in fifteen minutes. This is his card."

Dean took the card in his hand, and read the name

SAMUEL GUNNISON.

"Any acquaintance of yours?" asked the clerk.

"No; I never heard the name."

"I think he wants you to play to-morrow evening. He lives in the next town, Carterville."

"Mr. Montgomery has been called East. I am afraid this will stop our entertainments."

"He did not ask for Mr. Montgomery, only for you."

Mr. Gunnison soon came in. He was a slender, dark complexioned man, with a pleasant face.

"I know you are Dean Dunham," he said, extending his hand, "for I heard you play last evening. Are you engaged for to-morrow?"

"No, sir."

"Then I should like to engage your services. An entertainment is to be given in our town hall for the benefit of our town library. For the most part local talent is employed. We are to have a short play, and a few songs. I, as manager, have thought it would help us if we could advertise you in connection with the home attractions."

"I shall be glad to make an engagement," said Dean pleasantly.

"What would be your terms?" asked Mr. Gunnison a little anxiously.

"How much can you afford to pay me?" asked Dean.

"We would not think of offering a player of your reputation less than ten dollars if it were not desirable

to make expenses as small as possible, but——"

"Under the circumstances," said Dean, interrupting him, "I will be willing to come for five."

"Thank you, Mr. Dunham. You are very kind," said Mr. Gunnison, warmly, grasping our hero by the hand. "I will try to make it up to you. Instead of going to the hotel you shall be my guest, and your expenses will be nothing. If you are ready I will take you over at once. I have a buggy at the door."

"Thank you, sir, I will accept your kind invitation."

So Dean, feeling less lonesome than he did, secured his valise, and taking a seat beside his new friend, rode in the direction of Carterville. He was destined to meet an old acquaintance there.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Mr. Gunnison had several children, including one boy of about Dean's age, who was disposed at first to regard our hero with distant respect as a professional star, but soon became intimate with him on finding that Dean had the same tastes as himself. This appeared to surprise him.

"I say," he remarked, "I thought you wouldn't have anything to say to a fellow like me."

"Why not?" asked Dean, innocently.

"Oh, because you're a big gun."

"How's that?"

"You give concerts, and have your name in the papers."

"Oh!" said Dean smiling, "I have to do that for a living, you know. I'm only a boy after all."

"And do you like to play baseball?"

"I only wish I had a chance."

"Do you?" said Gus Gunnison, brightening up.

"Well, our club is going to play the Resolutes from the next town this afternoon. We are one man short. Will you take his place?"

"Yes, I shall be glad to."

"What place do you prefer?"

"I'll take any you choose to give me."

"Can you catch?"

"I like it better than anything else."

"Then that's settled. Come over and I'll show you the ground, and introduce you to some of the fellows."

When the members of the Carterville club learned that the famous young musician, Dean Dunham, had agreed to play on their side, they were very much elated. There was, however, a slight uneasiness lest he should not prove a skillful player, as they were eager to beat their visitors. A little practice playing, however, showed them that Dean was quite equal to any one in their club, and they became eager for the fray.

Dean did not disappoint them. He entered into the game with enthusiasm, and played with unusual skill, so that the Resolutes were beaten by a score of 18 to 8, and the victory was largely attributed to the good playing of the new catcher, who proved equally good in batting.

The members of the club came up and tendered their thanks to Dean.

"If you can play on the harmonica as well as you can play ball," said Gus Gunnison, "you'll do. Our club will attend the entertainment in a body, and hear you."

"I hope you won't be disappointed," said Dean smiling.

Evening came, and Dean was called upon to play at four different points in the entertainment. On the front seats just facing him were the members of the Active Baseball Club. Dean nodded to them from the platform, and they felt proud of such a public recognition.

Dean was stimulated to do his best, as he did not wish his new friends to be disappointed. During the day he practiced "Home, Sweet Home" with variations, partly original, partly remembered from a performance to which he had listened at a public entertainment a year or two previous. His efforts were crowned with success. The applause, led by the members of the Active club, was tumultuous, and Dean was compelled to repeat his performance.

He did so, but towards the close he nearly broke down in consequence of a surprising discovery that he made. In looking round the audience, not far from the center aisle his glance chanced to fall upon

a face which he had the best cause to remember.

It was no other than Mr. Peter Kirby, whose presence will be afterwards explained.

Mr. Kirby on his part was even more amazed to find the country boy whom he had left to his own resources emerging in such a conspicuous manner into public notice. He had thought of Dean as wandering about the country a forlorn and penniless tramp, begging for charity. How on earth he had managed to achieve the position of a musical star performer he could not imagine.

"That boy is getting dangerous," thought he. "If the captain knew of his success he would feel very nervous."

Mr. Kirby was in Carterville as the guest of Dr. Sidney Thorp, a wealthy gentleman, into whose good graces he had ingratiated himself at a hotel where they chanced to meet. He had accepted Dr. Thorp's invitation to spend a couple of days at his house, with the intention of robbing his hospitable entertainer if he should have the opportunity.

"A remarkable young performer!" said Dr. Thorp, as Dean closed his playing.

"Yes," assented Kirby absently. "How does he happen to be here?"

"He had been giving an entertainment in a town near by, in connection with a variety actor. Our

committee, finding that he gave satisfaction, invited him to play here this evening."

"Do you pay him anything?"

"Certainly," answered Dr. Thorp, with surprise. "We couldn't expect to obtain a performer of so much talent gratuitously."

Kirby opened his eyes in surprise at hearing his quondam secretary spoken of in such terms.

"Do you know how much he is to be paid?"

"I believe he agreed to come for five dollars, considering that the entertainment was for a charitable purpose."

Kirby could scarcely refrain from whistling, so great was his surprise.

He recognized Dean some time before his former secretary's glance fell upon him. Dean's start showed that the recognition was mutual.

"I am going to speak to this boy—Dean Dunham," said he to Dr. Thorp, when the entertainment was at an end.

"Mr. Gunnison will introduce you. Shall I ask him?"

"I need no introduction. The boy and I have met."

Dean was standing on the platform watching the departing audience, when he saw Mr. Kirby approaching. He felt a little nervous, not knowing

what the intentions of his old employer might be.

Kirby paused a moment, and a peculiar smile overspread his countenance.

"I presume you remember me?" he said.

"Yes," answered Dean, coldly.

"I am rather surprised to meet you again under such circumstances."

"I am rather surprised myself—at the circumstances."

"You have become quite a star!" said Kirby with a sneer.

Dean answered gravely, "I had to make a living in some way. It was an accident, my trying this way."

"Would you like to return to me—as my secretary?"

"Thank you, Mr. Kirby, I prefer to travel independently."

"Suppose I should tell why I discharged you? That might prove inconvenient to you."

"Then I should have a story to tell that might prove inconvenient to you, Mr. Kirby."

Dean looked Kirby straight in the face, and the latter saw that he no longer had an inexperienced country boy to deal with, but one who might prove dangerous to his plans.

"On the whole," he said, after a pause, "suppose we both keep silence as to the past."

"I will do so, unless I should have occasion to speak."

No one was near enough to listen to this conversation. Now Dr. Thorp came up, and Kirby said with an abrupt turn of the conversation, "I am glad to have met you again, my young friend. I wish you success."

Dean bowed gravely, but didn't speak. He was not prepared to wish success to Peter Kirby, knowing what he did of him.

During the evening Dr. Thorp called at the house of Mr. Gunnison, but unaccompanied by his guest. Dean had heard meanwhile at whose house Kirby was staying, and he felt that he ought to drop a hint that would put the unsuspecting host on his guard. He finally decided that it was his duty to do so.

"May I speak with you a moment in private, Dr. Thorp?" he asked, as the guest arose to go.

"Certainly," answered the doctor, in some surprise.

Dean accompanied him into the hall.

"Do you know much of the gentleman who is staying at your house?" asked Dean.

"No; why do you ask?"

"Because I have reason to think that he is a professional thief."

"Good Heavens! What do you mean!"

Dean briefly recounted the robberies of which he was himself cognizant, adding that he gave this information in strict confidence. "I thought I ought to put you on your guard," he concluded."

"Thank you, Mr. Dunham," said Dr. Thorp, warmly. "You have done me a great service. I happen to have a considerable sum in money and bonds at my house. I shall look out for Mr. Kirby," he added, with a grim nod.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DR. THORP'S CABINET.

DR. THORP had been pleased with Peter Kirby, who had laid himself out to be agreeable, and the doctor was far from suspecting his real character. When this was revealed to him by Dean, he quickly decided to test it for himself.

Some men, inclined to be nervous and timid, would have had their apprehensions excited, and dreaded an encounter with a professional criminal. But Dr. Thorp was cool, resolute and determined. He proposed to facilitate Kirby's designs, and catch him in a trap.

When he reached home he found Kirby smoking on the piazza.

"Have you been taking a walk, Doctor?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Dr. Thorp. "I made a call on a neighbor. I hope you have not been lonesome."

"Oh, no! Your daughter has enabled me to pass

the time pleasantly. But I am glad to see you back."

Had Kirby known that Dr. Thorp had had an interview with Dean Dunham, his anxiety would have been excited.

"By the way, Doctor," said Kirby with apparent carelessness, "I have a little money to invest. Can you recommend any form of investment?"

"You might buy a house in the village and settle down. I believe the next estate is for sale."

"It would certainly be an inducement to become your neighbor," said Kirby politely, "but I am a rolling stone. I am always traveling. I couldn't content myself in any one place, not even in a large city."

"I suspect your mode of life makes frequent removals necessary," thought Dr. Thorp, though he did not say so.

"Well, if you don't care to invest in real estate," he said a moment later, "you might purchase government bonds or railroad securities."

"To which do you give the preference?" asked Kirby.

The doctor smiled inwardly. He saw that Kirby was trying to ascertain whether he had any negotiable securities in his possession, but he was ready to play into his hands.

"Well," he said, "I think well of both."

"I had some government bonds at one time," said Kirby, "but they were stolen. That has made me cautious."

"Perhaps you were careless."

"No doubt I was. I kept them in a trunk at my boarding-house. I presume you wouldn't venture, even in a quiet village like this, to keep bonds in your house?"

"Oh, yes, we never receive visits from thieves or burglars. I don't consider trunks so safe as—that cabinet."

He pointed to a black walnut cabinet with several drawers standing in one corner of the room.

Kirby's face lighted up. He had got the information he desired, but he resumed his indifferent manner.

"I think you are right," he said. "Besides, in a town like Carterville, as you say, thieves are hardly likely to be found."

"Oh, dear, no!" said Dr. Thorp yawning. "I have no occasion to borrow trouble on that score."

"Living as I generally do in large cities where members of the criminal class abound," said Kirby, "I am naturally more suspicious than you. I confess I wish I lived in a place of Arcadian innocence like this."

Dr. Thorp smiled. He was amused to hear one whom he believed to be a professional thief discourse in this manner.

"You might find it dull," he said, a little satirically, "It would lack the spice and excitement of wickedness."

At a little after eleven Kirby signified that he was tired and was conducted to his bed-chamber. Dr. Thorp remained behind, and opening the lower drawer of his cabinet removed therefrom a roll of bank bills and a five hundred dollar government bond.

"I think these will be safe in my trunk to-night," he said to himself. "Now, Mr. Kirby, you can explore the cabinet at your leisure. I doubt if you will find enough to repay you for your trouble."

Kirby occupied a chamber just over the sitting-room. He didn't undress himself, but threw himself on the bed to snatch a little rest.

"I found out very cleverly where the doctor kept his bonds," he soliloquized. "He is an innocent, unsuspicious man, luckily for me. So no thieves or burglars ever visit Carterville," he repeated with a soft laugh. "The good doctor would have been mightily surprised had he known the character of the man with whom he was talking. It is hardly a credit to take in a simple-minded man like the doctor. I very much regret the necessity of repaying his hospi-

tality as I shall, but I need the bonds more than he does."

Kirby did not allow himself to sleep. There was important work to be done, and he must not run the risk of oversleeping himself.

He waited impatiently till he heard the public clock strike midnight, then taking off his shoes descended in his stocking feet to the sitting-room. There stood the cabinet plainly visible in the glorious moonlight that flooded the room, making artificial light unnecessary.

"It's an easy job for a man of my experience to open it," thought Kirby. "I hope the doctor is sound asleep. He looks like a man who is safe to sleep all night."

From his pocket he produced a bunch of skeleton keys, which he at once set himself to use. The lock on the drawer of the cabinet was a simple one, presenting no difficulty, and in less than five minutes he opened the upper drawer. A glance satisfied him that it contained nothing that he could make available. In turn he opened the other drawers, with equal ill success.

"The doctor must have fooled me!" he muttered impatiently, "or is there some secret drawer that I have overlooked?"

This question he asked himself, but he was far from expecting an answer.

"You have examined the cabinet pretty thoroughly Mr. Kirby," said a cool, calm voice.

Kirby sprang to his feet in wild dismay. There, looking at him from the doorway, was Dr. Thorp, his host, whom he was conspiring to rob.

"You are an early riser, are you not, Mr. Kirby?" said the doctor composedly.

Kirby quickly decided upon his course.

"Where am I?" he asked, passing his hand over his face in a bewildered way.

"Where are you? Don't you recognize the room? A more pertinent query would be, 'What are you doing?'"

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Kirby—"I—I see it now. That unfortunate habit of walking in my sleep! What can you think of me?"

"Do you generally carry skeleton keys about with you when you walk in your sleep, Mr. Kirby?" asked the doctor pointedly.

"I—I really don't know how to explain," stammered Kirby. "These keys I found in my room on the morning after I was robbed. I took them with me, thinking they might be of use if I should lose my regular keys."

"Very ingeniously explained, upon my word!"

"It isn't possible, Dr. Thorp, that you really take me for a thief! I hope you have more confidence in me."

"Well, it really did occur to me that you were a professional burglar. Your last words which I overheard before intruding upon you seem to bear out that supposition."

"What were they?"

"'*Is there some secret drawer that I have overlooked?*' Perhaps you will do me the favor to explain them."

"I can't. They were spoken unconsciously, I assure you. This habit of walking in my sleep has got me into trouble several times before."

"Then take my advice and discontinue it."

"I will. I should have asked you to lock me in my chamber if I could have foreseen what has happened."

"Mr. Kirby," said Dr. Thorp sternly, "you must think I am a simpleton to be taken in by such a transparent falsehood. I was deceived in you, I admit, but now I understand your real character. I won't have you arrested, though I ought, but I require you to leave my house at once."

"In the middle of the night?" said Kirby in dismay.

"Yes. I cannot agree to shelter you even for the balance of the night."

"Tell me one thing," said Kirby, changing his tone; "did any one put you on your guard against me?"

"Yes."

"It was Dean Dunham."

"You can form your own conclusions."

"That is all you need tell me. I understand it all. I will go to my room and secure my luggage, and then bid you good-bye."

"I will wait for you."

"I owe you another debt, Dean Dunham!" said Kirby, as he left the house with the pleasant prospect of a sleepless night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LONELY CABIN.

DEAN had left the breakfast-table the next morning, and was considering what would be the next stage of his journey when Dr. Thorp was announced.

"Mr. Dunham," he said, "I have come to thank you for your warning of last evening."

"I hope it was of service to you, sir."

"It was of essential service. Your old acquaintance had planned to rob me of a sum of money and a quantity of government bonds, but being on my guard I was able to frustrate his designs."

"How did it happen?" asked Mr. Gunnison, his curiosity excited.

"In the middle of the night, or rather a little after midnight, I heard some one going downstairs softly. I followed unobserved, and caught my guest opening the drawers in my cabinet."

"Where is he now?"

"I ordered him out of the house. He stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. Where he is now I cannot inform you, but presume he has placed several miles between himself and Carterville. Fortunately he went empty-handed, and my money and bonds are still in my possession. But for our young friend here I should hardly be able to say that."

"You are indebted to me for bringing him to Carterville, Dr. Thorp," said Mr. Gunnison in a jocular tone. "How much are you going to allow me?"

"You are amply repaid by his services," said the doctor, "judging from the comments I have heard upon his performance. I am under obligations to him, however, which I ought to acknowledge. Mr. Dunham," he continued, taking from his pocket a small gold watch and chain, "I see you have no watch. Please accept this with my best wishes."

It was an Elgin gold watch of neat pattern which he offered to Dean.

"It is not quite new," proceeded the doctor. "I bought it of a young man in need of money, and having paid him its full value I have no scruple in giving it away."

"Thank you very much," said Dean, his face showing the satisfaction he felt. "I have felt the need of a watch ever since I began to travel, but never

dreamed of anything better than a silver one. I shall be very proud of this one."

"And I am very glad to give it to you. In what direction do you propose to journey?"

"Westward, sir. I haven't any very clear ideas further than that."

"Shall you go as far as Colorado?"

"Yes, sir; I think so."

"I have a nephew out there somewhere—Henry Thorp—a young man of twenty-five. He is probably mining, but I don't know his location. Should you run across him, ask him to communicate with me. His aunt and myself will be glad to hear from him.

"I will not forget it, sir," said Dean, though he thought it quite improbable that he and the nephew referred to would ever meet.

Dr. Thorp took his leave, and Dean soon after took leave of the Gunnison family. He was pressed to remain and play another game of baseball, but felt that he could not spare the time.

A week later found Dean only a hundred miles farther on his way. He might have accomplished this distance on the cars in a few hours, but he preferred to make a leisurely trip, looking out for a chance to earn money on the way. But after a season of prosperity a dull time had come to him. During the week he did not make a single dollar.

He encountered several fair-sized towns, but did not feel able to give an entire entertainment himself. His stock of money dwindled, and he began to feel anxious.

Towards nightfall he found himself apparently at a distance from any town, and began to feel some solicitude as to where he could pass the night. It was a mountain region, and the day seemed to be shorter than on the plains. The air was chilly, and Dean felt that it would be dangerous to spend the night out of doors.

In this emergency he was pleased to descry a rough cabin a hundred feet from the road.

"There is shelter at any rate if they will take me in," thought Dean. "I will take care not to wander into such a wild region again."

He went up to the door, and knocked with his bare knuckles.

He heard a shuffling noise inside, and an old woman, with gray hair, unconfined and hanging loose like a horse's mane, faced him.

"Who are you?" she inquired abruptly.

"A traveler," answered Dean.

"What do you want?"

"I have lost my way. Can you let me stay here all night?"

"This isn't a tavern," she responded in a surly tone.

"I suppose not, but I am willing to pay for supper and a lodging. I don't see any other house near by, or I would not trouble you."

The old woman eyed him with a curious scrutiny which made him vaguely uncomfortable, so weird and uncanny was her look.

"Have you got any money?" she asked at last.

"A little," answered Dean, growing suddenly cautious.

"Well, you can come in," she said after a pause.

Dean entered, and cast a glance about him.

The cabin was certainly a primitive one. What furniture it contained seemed home made, put together awkwardly with such material as came to hand. In place of chairs were two boxes such as are used to contain shoes, placed bottom up. There was a small stove, the heat of which seemed grateful to the chilly young traveler.

"It is cold," remarked Dean, by way of opening the conversation.

"Humph!" answered the woman. "Have you come all the way to tell me that?"

"Evidently the old woman isn't sociable," thought Dean.

"Where do you live when you're to home?" asked the woman after a pause.

"In New York State."

"What did you come out here for?"

"I had my living to make," answered Dean, feeling uncomfortable.

"I haven't found any, and I've lived here goin' on ten years. I suppose you want some supper," she continued ungraciously.

"Yes, I am very hungry. I am sorry to put you to any trouble."

The woman did not answer, but going to a rude pantry took out a plate of meat, and some dry bread. The former she put in the oven, and proceeded to brew some tea.

Dean watched her preparations with eager interest. It seemed to him that he had never been so hungry. He had probably walked ten miles over a rough path, and the exercise had tired him as much as twice the distance on the plain. Besides he had his valise with him, and had found it decidedly an incumbrance.

From time to time the old woman paused in her preparations and eyed him searchingly. What it was that attracted her attention Dean could not guess till she suddenly pointed to his chain, and asked, "Is there a watch at the end of that?"

"Yes," answered Dean with a sudden feeling of apprehension.

"Let me look at it."

Reluctantly he drew out the watch, and into the

woman's eyes crept a covetous gleam, as she advanced and took it in her hand.

"It's pretty," she said. "What's it worth?"

"I don't know," answered Dean. "I didn't buy it. It was a present to me."

"It ought to be worth a good sum."

"I value it because it was given me by a friend," said Dean hurriedly.

"We've got nothing to tell time by," said the woman, slowly, still eying the watch with a fixed look, "except the sun."

Dean did not reply.

"How do you wind it up?" asked the woman after a pause. "Do you have a key?"

"No; it's a stem-winder."

"What's that?"

"I will show you," and Dean wound the watch as far as it would go.

"I never saw the like of that," said his hostess with a look of mingled curiosity and surprise.

She released her hold upon the watch, and Dean put it back in his pocket, rather relieved to have recovered possession of it again.

Five minutes later the meal was ready, such as it was.

"Set up," said the woman.

Dean obeyed with alacrity.

He tasted the meat. It was not unpleasant, but the taste was peculiar.

"What kind of meat is it?" he asked.

"B'ar meat."

"Are there bears in these mountains?"

"Yes; my son killed this one. He's killed many a b'ar, Dan has. He's a master hand with the rifle. There's none that can beat him."

"Isn't it dangerous to tackle a bear?"

"No; the b'ars a nat'rally timorous animal. I've killed more'n one myself."

As Dean surveyed his hostess, he thought her quite capable of encountering a bear. Her walk and air were masculine, and there seemed nothing feminine about her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAN.

DEAN did not allow his speculations as to his hostess to interfere with his appetite, but he ate with an enjoyment which he had seldom before felt the food set before him.

"'Pears to me you've got a right smart appetite," said the woman.

"Yes, I have," said Dean, frankly. "I don't know when I have been so hungry. I am ashamed of my appetite, but I can't help it."

"Young folks is mostly hungry," said the woman.

"Especially when they have such nice things set before them."

The woman, rough as she was, seemed pleased by this tribute to her culinary skill.

"Well, you needn't be afraid to eat all you want to," she said encouragingly.

Dean took her at her word, and when he rose from

the table, he had made way with a large share of the repast provided.

It had grown quite dark in the deepening shadows of the hills, but it was a twilight darkness, not the darkness of midnight.

"I think I will go out and take a walk," said Dean, turning to his hostess.

"You'll come back?" she asked with apparent anxiety.

"Yes, for I don't want to sleep out of doors. I can settle for my supper now if you wish."

"No, you can wait till morning."

"Very well!"

Dean left the house, and walked some distance over the mountain road. Finally, being a little fatigued from his day's travel and the hearty supper he had eaten, he lay down under a tree, and enjoyed the luxury of rest on a full stomach.

In the stillness of the woods it was possible to hear even a sound ordinarily indistinct. Gradually Dean became sensible of a peculiar noise which seemed like the distant murmur of voices. He looked about him in all directions, but failed to understand from what the voices proceeded. It seemed almost as if the sounds came from below. Yet this seemed absurd.

"There can't be any mine about here," reflected

Dean. "If there were, I could understand a little better about the sounds."

Certainly it was not a very likely place for a mine.

"I wonder if I am dreaming," thought Dean.

He rubbed his eyes, and satisfied himself that he was as much awake as he ever was in his life.

He got up and walked around, looking inquisitively about him, in the hope of localizing the sound. Suddenly it stopped, and all was complete silence. Then he was quite at a loss.

"I don't know what it means. I may as well lie down and rest again. I imagine my landlady won't care about seeing me before it is time to go to bed."

With this thought Dean dismissed his conjectures, and gave himself up to a pleasant reverie. He didn't worry, though his prospects were not of the best. He was nearly out of money, and there appeared no immediate prospect of earning more. Where he was he did not know, except that he was somewhere among the mountains of Colorado.

"I wish I could come across some mining settlement," thought Dean. "I couldn't buy a claim, but I could perhaps hire out to some miner, and after a while get rich enough to own one myself."

Suddenly his reflections were broken in upon by a discordant voice.

"Who are you, youngster, and where did you drop from?"

Looking up quickly, Dean's glance fell upon a rough-looking man, in hunting costume considerably the worse for wear, with a slouched hat on his head, and a rifle in his hand. The man's face was far from prepossessing, and his manner did not strike Dean as friendly.

"My name is Dean Dunham," he said in answer to the first question, then paused.

"How came you here?"

"I am traveling."

"Where from?"

"New York State."

"What brings a boy like you so far from home? Is there anyone with you?" demanded the man suspiciously.

"No; I wish there was. I had a companion, but he got a call to go home on account of his mother's sickness."

"And you pushed on?'

"Yes."

"What are you after—it isn't game, for you've got no gun."

"No; I'm after a chance to make a living, as much as anything."

"Couldn't you make a living at home?"

"Not one that satisfied me."

"Can you do any better here?"

"I can't tell yet," answered Dean, while an expression of genuine perplexity overspread his face. It was a question which he had often asked himself. "I think if I could come across some mining settlement I could work for myself or somebody else."

"Are you goin' to stay out all night? There ain't many hotels round here."

"I have had supper, and am going to spend the night at a cabin about a mile from here."

"You are!" exclaimed the hunter in a tone of profound astonishment. "How did you get in?"

"I asked a woman who lives there if she would let me stop over night, and she was kind enough to say yes."

"Then you have had your supper?"

"Yes."

"And are you goin' to sleep in the cabin?"

"Yes. Do you live anywhere near it?"

"Well, I should smile! Youngster, that's where I live, and the woman who gave you your supper is my mother."

"Then you are Dan," said Dean, eagerly.

"How do you know my name?"

"Your mother told me you killed the bear whose meat I ate for supper."

"That's correct, youngster. I killed him, but it's nothing to kill a b'ar. I've killed hundreds of 'em."

"I should be proud if I could say I had killed one," said Dean, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

"If you stay round here long enough, you may have a chance. But I'm goin' home. It's growin' dark and you may as well go with me."

Dean rose from his recumbent position, and drew his watch from his pocket.

"Yes," he said, "it's past eight o'clock."

"Let me look at that watch. Is it gold?" asked his companion, and his eyes showed the same covetous gleam which Dean had noticed in the mother.

"I wish I had hidden the watch in an inside pocket," he thought, too late. "I am afraid it will be taken from me before I get away from these mountains."

"What might it be worth?" demanded the other, after fingering it curiously with his clumsy hands.

"I don't know," answered Dean, guardedly. "I did not buy it. It was given to me."

"Is it worth a hundred dollars?"

"I don't think it is. It may be worth fifty."

"Humph! are you rich?"

"No; far from it! I am a poor boy."

"That doesn't look like it."

"The watch was given to me by a rich man to whom I had done a service."

The man handed it back, but it seemed with reluctance.

"Youngster, what do you think of my mother?" he asked, abruptly.

"She treated me kindly," answered Dean, rather embarrassed.

"Did you agree to pay her for your lodging?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Mother ain't one of the soft kind. Did she strike you as an agreeable old lady?"

"I only saw her for a few minutes," said Dean, evasively.

His companion laughed, and surveyed Dean quizzically.

"You must stretch your legs, youngster, or mother'll get tired waiting for me. She might take a notion not to give me any supper."

It was not long before they came in sight of the cabin. Here a surprise, and by no means an agreeable one, awaited Dean. On a bench in front of the cabin sat a man whom he had good reason to remember, and equal reason to fear—Peter Kirby

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SHOULD OLD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?"

If Dean was surprised to see his old enemy in such an out of the way place, Kirby was no less surprised to see his former traveling companion. There was this difference: the encounter brought him pleasure, while to Dean it carried dismay. Neither could understand where on earth the other had sprung from.

"Oho!" laughed Kirby, "so we meet again."

Dan looked surprised, thinking the words were addressed to him, but following the direction of Kirby's eyes, he saw that he was mistaken.

"Do you know this boy?" he asked.

"Do I know him? Why, we started from the East together."

"How is that?"

"It was at the request of a friend of ours."

"The captain?"

"Yes."

"And why did you separate?"

"Well, I mustn't tell tales out of school. I am very glad to meet you again, youngster. Is the pleasure mutual?"

"No, it isn't," said Dean, bluntly.

"So I should judge, after the trick you played upon me at our last meeting."

"What do you refer to?"

"You know well enough. You cautioned Dr. Thorp against me. Don't deny it, for I know it is true."

"I don't deny it. What happened that night showed that I had good reason."

"Be that as it may," said Kirby with an ugly scowl, "you did a bad thing for yourself. You probably thought you would never meet me again."

Dean was silent, but Dan, whose curiosity was aroused, interposed with an inquiry.

"What are you two talkin' about," he said. "Is this boy a friend or an enemy?"

"He is an enemy of our association," replied Kirby. "I am glad to have him in my power."

"So there is an association?" thought Dean. "These two men belong to it, and Squire Bates is the captain. I shall soon know all about it."

But in the meanwhile the evident hostility of

Kirby, reflected in the face of his new acquaintance Dan, was ominous of danger. Dean felt that he would gladly pass the night out in the woods exposed to the night air if he could only get away. But he saw clearly that escape was not at present practicable.

"Have you seen the old woman?" asked Dan, meaning his mother.

"Yes, she told me that she had taken in a kid for the night, but I had no idea it was any one I knew. The old lady wears well, Dan."

"Yes, she's tough," said the affectionate son carelessly. "I'll go in and see whether she's got supper ready."

He entered the house, leaving Dean and his old employer together.

"Come here, boy, and sit down," said Kirby smiling, and eying Dean very much as a cat eyes the mouse whom she proposes soon to devour. "You must be tired."

"Thank you," said Dean calmly, as he went forward and seated himself on the settee beside Peter Kirby.

"What brought you so far West as Colorado?" proceeded Kirby, giving vent to his curiosity.

"I kept coming West. Besides I heard there were

mines in Colorado, and I thought I might find profitable work."

"So you gave up playing on that harmonica of yours?"

"Yes."

"Couldn't you make it pay?"

"I needed a partner like the one I started with—Mr. Montgomery. I couldn't give an entertainment alone."

"Then you haven't been making any money lately?"

"No."

"Where did you get that watch?"

"From Dr. Thorp."

"When did he give it to you?"

"Just before I left town."

"It was a present to you for informing on me, I suppose?" said Kirby, his face again assuming an ugly frown.

"I believe it was for saving him from being robbed."

"Then he had considerable money and bonds in the house?"

"Yes."

"Were they in the cabinet?"

"He removed them."

"After I went to bed?"

"I believe so."

"It seems then that I am indebted to you for foiling my little scheme."

Kirby looked dangerous, and Dean was alive to the peril incurred, but he was obliged in the interests of truth to answer in the affirmative.

Here Dan appeared at the door.

"Come in, Kirby," he said. "Supper's ready."

"I am ready for it. I am about famished. Come in, boy."

"Thank you; I have supped already."

"All the same you must come in, for I don't propose to lose sight of you. Hand over that watch, please."

"Why do you want it?" asked Dean apprehensively.

"I have more claim to it than you. It was the price of treachery."

"I hope, Mr. Kirby, you will let me keep it."

"Hand it over without any more words!" said Kirby, roughly, "unless you want me to take it from you."

It would have been idle to resist, but Dean was not willing to hand it over, since that would have indicated his consent to the surrender.

"You can take it if you choose," he said.

"It will do after supper. Come in!"

Dean preceded Kirby into the cabin, and sat down on a stool while the two men were eating. Gradually they dropped into conversation, and Dean listened with curious interest.

"So you saw the captain, Kirby?" asked Dan.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"He lives in an obscure country place, buried alive, as I call it. It is for the sake of his family, he says."

"What family has he?"

"A wife and son—the last as like his father as two peas—the same ugly tusks, and long, oval face. Between the two I prefer the captain. The boy puts on no end of airs."

'Does he know——"

"Not a word. He thinks his father a gentleman of wealth and high birth, and holds his head high, I can tell you."

"Does that boy know him?" asked Dan, with a jerk of the head towards Dean.

"You know Brandon Bates, don't you, Dean?" said Kirby.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you like him?"

"I don't think any one in the village likes him."

"How about his father? is he popular?"

"He is better liked than his son."

"The fact is," resumed Kirby, "the captain's boy is an impudent cub. He was insolent to me. I could have tweaked his nose with pleasure."

"There seems to be one point on which Mr. Kirby and I agree," thought Dean. But upon the whole it did not seem to him that he liked Kirby any better than Brandon Bates. Brandon had unpleasant manners, but it was clear that Kirby was a professional thief.

"When is the captain coming West?" asked Dan.

"Soon, I think. He may be needed for some work in Denver. I shall make a report to him when I have gathered the information we need, and urge him to come. He has brains, the captain has, and he must give us the advantage of them."

"What plan are you thinkin' of Kirby?"

"Hush!" said Kirby, glancing toward Dean. "I will speak with you about that later."

After supper they went out again, and sat on the settee, both smoking pipes provided by Dan. Dean was invited to come out also, but he felt very much fatigued, and asked if he might go to bed.

"Mother," said Dan, "can the kid go up to bed?"

"Yes, if he wants to."

"I'll go up with him."

Dan led the way up a narrow staircase to the second floor. There were two rooms, each with a

sloping roof. On the floor was spread a sacking filled with hay, one end raised above the general level.

"You can sleep there, youngster," said Dan. "There's no use in undressin'. Lay down as you are."

Dean was quite ready to do so. Though he was apprehensive about the future, fatigue asserted its claim, and in less than five minutes he was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXX.

DEAN FINDS HIMSELF IN A HOLE.

Dean seemed to himself to have slept not more than an hour, though in reality several hours passed, when he was aroused by being shaken not over gently.

"Time to get up?" he asked drowsily.

"Yes, it's time to get up," answered a rough voice.

Now he opened his eyes wide, and he saw Kirby looking down on him. At a flash all came back to him, and he realized his position.

He rose from his pallet and asked, "Can I wash my face and hands?"

"No; there is no time for it. Follow me!"

Rightly concluding that it would be useless to question Kirby, Dean followed him to the lower floor, where Dan had already seated himself at the breakfast-table. In obedience to a signal Dean sat down also, and ate with what appetite he could the repast spread before him. In addition to cold meat

and bread there was what passed for coffee, though it probably was not even distantly related to the fragrant beverage which we know by that name. Dean drank it, however, not without relish, for it was at least hot.

Fifteen minutes sufficed for breakfast, and then Dan and Kirby left the cabin, motioning to Dean to follow.

Outside the cabin Kirby said, "Have you a handkerchief?"

"Yes," answered Dean, wondering why such a question should be asked.

"Give it to me!"

Dean mechanically obeyed.

Kirby took it, and, folding it, tied it over Dean's eyes.

"Are we going to play blind man's buff?" asked Dean.

"Yes," answered Kirby grimly, "and you are the blind man."

"I should like to know what you have done this for," said Dean, more seriously.

"I can't answer your question, but no harm will come to you if you keep quiet. You are going to take a walk with us."

"And you don't want me to know where you are taking me."

"You've hit it right the first time, youngster," said Dan.

"I suppose it's no use to resist," said Dean firmly, "but I must say that you have no right to take away my freedom."

"You can say it if you want to, but it won't make any difference."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"You'll know in time."

Dan and Kirby ranged themselves one on each side of Dean, and he was walked off between them. He asked one or two questions, but was admonished to keep silence. So they walked for twenty minutes, or perhaps half an hour, when Dan left his side, and Dean was compelled to halt in the custody of Kirby.

"It's all ready!" said Dan, reappearing. Again he took Dean by the arm, and they walked forward perhaps a dozen paces.

Then Kirby said, "Here are some steps."

Dean found himself descending a flight of steps—ten in number, for he took the trouble to count them. He was getting more and more mystified, and would have given a good deal to remove the handkerchief that bandaged his eyes, but it was impossible to do it even surreptitiously, for both arms were pinioned by his guides. At the end of the flight of steps they came again to level ground, and walked forward

perhaps a hundred feet. Dean suspected from the earthy odor that they were under the ground. He soon learned that his supposition was correct, for his guides halted, and loosened their hold upon his arms.

"You can remove the handkerchief now," said Kirby.

Dean lost no time in availing himself of this permission.

He looked around him eagerly.

He found himself in what appeared to be not a natural, but an artificial cave—dark, save for the light of a kerosene lamp, which was placed on a little rocky shelf, and diffused a sickly light about the cellar. At the end of the room there was a passage leading, as it seemed, to some inner apartment.

Dean looked about in surprise.

"What place is this?" he asked.

"You may call it a cave if you like."

"How long are you going to stay here?"

"About five minutes."

"That will be enough for me," said Dean shrugging his shoulders.

"Hardly. You are to stay longer."

"Are you going to leave me here—under the earth?" asked Dean, in alarm.

"Don't you be scared, youngster—you will be safe. You won't be alone. Here, Pompey."

Through the inner passage came a stunted negro, with a preternaturally large head, around which was pinned a cotton cloth in the shape of a turban. He bowed obsequiously, and eyed Dean with evident curiosity mingled with surprise.

"This boy has come to visit you, Pompey," said Kirby, with grim pleasantry.

"Yah, yah, massa!" chuckled Pompey, showing the whites of his eyes.

"You must take good care of him. Give him something to eat when he is hungry, but don't let him escape."

"Yah, massa!"

"He will ask you questions, but you must be careful what you tell him. Remember, he is not one of us, and he mustn't learn too much."

"Yah, massa! I understand. What's his name?"

"Dean."

"Dat's a funny name. I never heard the like."

"Yes, you have. Dan's like it."

"So it am, massa! Dat's a fac'."

"Now, youngster, I am going to leave you in the company of Pompey here, who will do his best to make you comfortable and happy."

"When are you coming back for me?" asked Dean, apprehensively.

"Well, that depends upon circumstances. You'd better not trouble yourself about that. Perhaps in a week, perhaps in a month. In the meantime you will have free board, and won't have to work for a living. There are a good many who would like to change places with you."

"If you meet any such, send them along," said Dean, with a jocoseness that thinly veiled a feeling bordering upon despair.

"Ha, ha! That's a good one. Dan, our young friend is becoming a practical joker. That's right, young one. Keep up good courage. I must bid you good-bye now. Come along, Dan."

The two turned away, and Dean with despairing eyes saw them going back to freedom and the light of day, while he was left in the company of an ignorant black in a subterranean dungeon.

"Law, honey, don't take on!" said Pompey, good-naturedly. "There ain't no harm comin' to you."

"I should think harm had come to me. Here am I shut up in this black hole!"

"'Taint so bad, honey, when you're used to it. I didn't like it first myself."

"How long have you lived down here?"

"I can't justly say."

"Is it a year, or a month?"

"I can't say, young massa," answered Pompey, who was evidently bent on carrying out Kirby's admonitions not to tell too much to his young guest.

"When did you come hyah?" asked Pompey, thinking it only fair that he should ask a question.

"Into this neighborhood? I only came yesterday."

"And where did you meet Massa Kirby?"

"At the cabin of the other man—Dan. But I had seen him before. I met him first at the East, in New York State."

"In York State!" repeated Pompey.

"Yes. We traveled together for a while."

Pompey nodded his head slowly, but evidently he had no very clear idea of what it all meant.

"Are you hungry, young massa?" he asked, after a pause.

"No; I have had my breakfast."

"I must go to work," said the negro, turning to go back by the narrow passage from which he had emerged.

"May I go with you?"

"Yes, young massa, if you want to."

Anything was better than being left alone in the dark, cavernous room, and Dean followed the negro, who was so short that he could readily look over his

head, till at the end of the passage he emerged into another apartment, which was fitted up as a kitchen, and contained a stove. From the stove rose an upright funnel, which pierced the roof, providing a vent for the smoke when there was a fire, and allowing air to come in from above. It flashed upon Dean that it was through this funnel had come the mysterious sounds which puzzled him so much when he was reclining in the wood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VALUE OF A HARMONICA.

About the middle of the forenoon Pompey curled up on a pallet in one corner of the room, and went to sleep. There was nothing in particular to do, and it seemed rather a sensible way of spending the time. Dean, however, felt too anxious to follow his example.

It occurred to him that it would be a good time for him to gratify his curiosity by examining the cavern in which he was immured, and devise, if possible, some method of escape. First he went up close to Pompey, and examined him carefully to see whether he was really asleep, or only shamming. But the negro's deep breathing soon satisfied him that there was no sham about his slumber. So Dean felt at liberty to begin his exploration.

He went back to the entrance, which he knew by the staircase he had descended with Kirby and Dan. He mounted to the top, and found his way barred by

a trap-door which he tried, but unsuccessfully, to raise. It appeared to be secured by a lock, and, not having the key, there was no hope of escape. He gazed ruefully at this door, which shut him out from liberty.

"I wonder if there is any other way out of the cave," he asked himself.

It didn't seem probable, but it was of course possible, and worth while to investigate. If there were it would be at the other end, no doubt.

He retraced his steps, and found Pompey still fast asleep, and utterly unconscious of the movements of the prisoner under his charge.

Dean took a lamp and went farther into the cave. There seemed to be a series of excavations, connected by narrow passages. In one of these was a large box, constructed like a sailor's chest. It occurred to him that it might belong to Pompey, and be used by him to contain his clothing. But a little thought suggested that the negro was not likely to have a large stock of clothes. Probably the suit he had on was about all he possessed. What, then, did the chest contain?

At each end was a handle. Dean took hold of one and tried to lift the chest. But he found it very heavy, much heavier than it would have been had it contained clothing.

He rose to his feet and eyed it with curiosity. There was nothing elaborate about the lock, and it struck Dean that a key which he had in his pocket might possibly unlock it. Upon the impulse of the moment he kneeled down and inserted it in the lock.

Very much to his surprise, and indeed it did seem an extraordinary chance, for it was the only key he had, it proved to fit the lock. He turned it, and raised the lid. The sight dazzled him.

Before him lay piles of gold and silver coins, and a package of bank bills. This cave was evidently the store house of an organized band of robbers, and the chest might be considered their treasury.

"I wonder if this is real," thought Dean. "It seems like a scene in the Arabian Nights."

It did indeed seem strange that this far off nook of Colorado should be the rendezvous and treasure house of a band so widely scattered that the captain was a quiet citizen of a small town in the State of New York, nearly two thousand miles away.

How improbable it would have seemed to the citizens of Waterford, among whom Squire Bates moved, living in outward seeming the life of any other respectable and law abiding citizen! This was the Waterford mystery, which by a series of remarkable adventures it had fallen to Dean to solve.

He locked the chest, fearing that Pompey might

suddenly awake, and, following, discover what he was about. He wanted some time to think over this strange discovery, and consider what to do. To be sure, there seemed little chance of his doing anything except to remain where he was, a subterranean prisoner.

Dean felt more than ever a desire to leave the cave, but the prospect was not encouraging. Why he was kept a prisoner he could guess. He knew too much of the band, and especially of their leader, and he was considered dangerous. His imprisonment might be a prolonged one, and Dean felt that this would be intolerable.

It was in a very sober frame that he returned to the room where Pompey was still sleeping. An hour later the negro awoke and stretched himself.

"Have I been asleep long, young massa?" he asked.

"Two or three hours, I should think, Pompey."

"Dat's strange! I only just closed my eyes for a minute, and I done forgot myself."

"You might as well go to sleep. There's nothing else to do."

"I must get some dinner, honey. Don't you feel hungry?"

"I might eat something," said Dean listlessly.

Pompey bustled round, and prepared a lunch, to

which Dean, homesick as he was, did not fail to do justice. It takes a great deal to spoil the appetite of a growing boy.

After the noon repast Dean sat down. He was beginning to find the monotony intolerable.

"Have you got any books down here, Pompey?" he asked.

Pompey shook his head.

"No use for books, young massa. I can't read."

"But I can."

"Perhaps Massa Kirby will bring you some if you ask him."

Dean did not care to ask any favor of Kirby. Moreover he knew that that gentleman was not particularly literary, and doubted if he was in a position to grant the request.

By way of beguiling the time he took out his harmonica in an absent mood, and began to play "Old Folks at Home."

Instantly Pompey was on the alert. His eyes brightened, and he fixed them in rapture upon the young player.

"What's dat, young massa?" he asked.

"That's a harmonica."

"You do play beau'ful, young massa."

"Thank you, Pompey, I am glad you like it."

"Play some more," entreated Pompey.

Dean complied with the negro's request, partly because he was obliging, partly because it helped to fill up the time. He could scarcely forbear laughing to see Pompey rocking to and fro with his mouth open, drinking in the melodious strains.

Nature had given Pompey a rapt appreciation of music, and he began to croon a vocal accompaniment to the instrument.

"Who learn you to play, young massa?" he asked.

"I taught myself. It isn't hard."

"Dat's because your white. A poor nigger like me couldn't learn," said Pompey half inquiringly.

"Oh yes, you could. I see you have an ear for music. Would you like to try?"

"If you would let me."

Dean handed the negro the harmonica, and gave him the necessary directions. In the course of half an hour he was able to play through "Old Folks at Home," with substantial accuracy.

"I wish I had a harmonicum," said Pompey wistfully. "It would make old Pompey happy."

An idea came into Dean's head—a wild, perhaps an impracticable idea, but he resolved to carry it out, if possible.

"Pompey," he said, "I'll give you the harmonica if you'll let me out of the cave."

Pompey rolled his eyes in affright.

"Couldn't do it no how, young massa," he said. "Massa Kirby would kill me."

"He'd think I got away when you were asleep, Pompey. Come, I'll show you two or three more tunes on the instrument, and you can learn others yourself."

"I don't dare to, young massa," said Pompey, but there was a suspicion of indecision in his voice.

"Very well, then, give me back the harmonica. I will never play any more upon it."

"Oh, young massa!"

"I mean what I say, Pompey"—and Dean put the harmonica in his pocket.

Pompey eyed him with a troubled look. He was evidently weighing the matter in his mind.

"If I thought Massa Kirby wouldn't kill me," he said reflectively.

Dean upon this redoubled his persuasions. He played another tune on the harmonica—"Sweet Home"—with variations, and this completed the conquest of his sable custodian.

"I'll do it, young massa," said Pompey, hoarsely. "Give me the harmonicum, and I'll take the risk."

Dean did not want to give him time for reflection. He seized his hat, and handed Pompey the instrument.

The negro guided him, not to the front entrance which he already knew, but to a back exit which he had overlooked. Here there was a door skillfully concealed on the outside. Pompey drew out a key, opened it, and with infinite relief Dean again saw the sunshine and breathed the air of freedom.

"Good-bye, Pompey!" he said. "I thank you with all my heart."

"If Massa Kirby cotch you, don't you tell him I let you go," said Pompey, hoarsely.

"No, I won't, Pompey, but I don't mean to let him catch me."

The door closed behind him, and Dean paused to consider what course to take. He must at all hazards avoid falling in with Kirby and Dan.

"That harmonica is worth its weight in gold!" thought Dean, gratefully. "It is a regular talisman."

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

DEAN had no particular choice as to the direction he would take. His principal desire was to get out of the neighborhood, so as to avoid meeting Kirby or Dan, as this would insure a second term of imprisonment from which he could not hope to escape so easily. He had a general idea of the location of the cabin in which he had passed the previous night, and he shaped his course as far away from it as possible. He looked at his watch, which Kirby had neglected to take, and found that it was between four and five in the afternoon. He did not know how far the wooded district extended, but hoped soon to emerge from it.

It might have been that he was bewildered, but the farther he traveled the more he seemed to be surrounded by trees. Moreover the shades were

DEAN SPRANG INTO THE BOAT AND PUSHED OFF FROM THE SHORE

deepening, and soon the night would settle about him.

"I wish I had a compass," thought Dean. "That would help me find my way out of this labyrinth."

He had met no one as yet, and this was upon the whole a relief, as the persons most likely to be encountered were Kirby and Dan. But at length a sound of voices fell upon his ear, and he stayed his steps in momentary alarm. He listened intently, but was reassured when he found that the voices were unfamiliar.

"It may be some one who can show me the way out of these woods," thought Dean. "At any rate I don't believe they will harm a boy. I will try to find them."

Guided by the voices he directed his steps in the direction of the sound, and found himself at length in an open space. Under a tree reclined two stalwart men who, from their garb, appeared to be miners. They were lying in an easy position, and both were smoking pipes.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen," said Dean politely.

The two men looked up in surprise.

"Why, it's a kid!" ejaculated one. "How came you here, boy?"

"I'll tell you, if you don't mind my joining you," said Dean.

"Come and welcome! It's rather refreshing to see a young chap like you. I've got a boy at home who is within a year or two as old as you."

"I am sixteen."

"So I thought. My boy is fourteen. What is your name?"

"Dean Dunham. I come from Waterford, New York."

"Then you are from my State. I am from Syracuse. My name is Rawson—Ben Rawson. My friend here is Ebenezer Jones, commonly called Eben, a Connecticut Yankee—Eben, shake with our young friend."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Jones," said Dean, extending his hand with a smile.

"You must look out for Eben," said Rawson jocosely. "Them Connecticut Yankees are as sharp as they make 'em."

"I will risk it," said Dean. "I am very glad to meet you both, for I was beginning to feel that I was lost."

"Eben and I are too good mountaineers to be easily lost. How long have you been in these woods?"

"Since yesterday noon."

"Did you sleep out?"

"No, I found a cabin where I lodged."

"You were in luck.'

"In bad luck."

"How is that?" asked Rawson in surprise. "Were you robbed?"

"No, but I found myself in the company of two men who I am pretty sure belong to a gang of robbers. One of them I had seen before—at the East. They blindfolded me, and took me, to a cavern, where they left me in charge of a negro named Pompey."

"What could be their object?" asked Rawson. "You are sure you're not romancing, boy?"

"I wish I were, but the cave exists, just as certainly as I do."

"But of what use is it?"

"I think it is a hiding-place for their booty," answered Dean, and he gave an account of the chest which he had opened, and the nature of its contents.

"Why didn't you take a handful of the gold?" asked Rawson.

"At the time I didn't know but I should have to remain in the cave, when of course it would be discovered on me. Besides, though I knew it to be stolen property I didn't feel like taking it."

"Eben and I wouldn't be so particular. Whereabouts is this cave?"

"I think it must be three or four miles away, but

I may be mistaken, for I got turned round, and may have doubled on my tracks. I have been afraid I might fall in with Kirby and Dan. When I heard your voices I thought at first it might be them."

"You're safe now, lad. We would be more than a match for them, even if they did turn up. I shouldn't mind giving them a lesson. But you haven't told us what brought you out here, lad."

"I thought I might make a better living than at home."

"And have you?"

"So far I have, but my prospects don't appear to be very bright just now."

"Don't be too sure of that. Suppose you join us."

"I shall be glad to do so, if you will let me."

"Then we'll shake hands to our better acquaintance. I'd offer you a pipe if I had an extra one."

"Thank you; I don't smoke."

"Well, lad, perhaps you're right. Smoking won't do any good to a boy like you."

"If I am to join you would you mind telling me your plans?"

"Of course I will. We're miners, as you might guess from our looks. We've been up in Gilpin County, and have done pretty well. We've got some claims there yet, but we wanted a little change and have been on a little prospecting tour."

"Have you had good luck?"

"In prospecting? No! We are on our way back, and shall settle down to work again all the better for our holiday."

"How long have you been out here?" asked Dean.

"I've been here fourteen months—Eben for a year. We never met before, but we concluded to join forces, and haven't regretted it, eh—Eben?"

"Right you are, Rawson."

"Eben here has a girl at home that's waiting for him. When he has made his pile, he's going back to her."

"And how about you, Mr. Rawson?"

"Never mind about the handle to my name, youngster. Call me Ben."

"But you are so much older than I," objected Dean.

"We're free and easy out here—it's the best way. When we get back to the East you may call me Mr. Rawson if you want to. I say, Eben, if we take the boy into partnership, he ought to have some capital."

"I am sorry that I can't put in any capital," said Dean. "Besides this watch I haven't over five dollars about me."

"You misunderstand me, lad. I mean that Eben and I should set you up in business. We've got six

claims—between us. What do you say, Eben, to giving this boy two? Then we shall be equal partners, and share and share alike."

"It's just as you say, Ben," answered Eben, who was evidently guided in all things by his older companion.

"You are very generous, Ben," said Dean, "but I ought not to accept such a gift. If you don't mind giving me one, I will take it, and thank you."

"No, lad," persisted Rawson. "It's share and share alike, as I said."

"But I ought not to be on equal terms with you two, who have others to look out for."

"You won't be, lad—Eben and I have each got a pile salted down in one of the banks in Denver. It's near five thousand dollars apiece, isn't it, Eben?"

"Yes, not far from that, Rawson."

"We will share alike for the future—that's what I mean. There's more gold where the other came from, and I hope the claims will pan out well for your sake."

Dean felt that he had indeed fallen into good hands. He might have traveled far enough in the East without meeting strangers so free-handed. Indeed had he met the same parties at home, he would scarcely have found them so liberal. The wild, free

life of the West had opened their hearts and made them generous.

"Hist!" said Rawson suddenly, raising his hand, and assuming an intent look, "I think I hear voices."

He was right. Two men, walking slowly, and appearing to be in earnest conversation, approached. "It's Dan and Kirby!" said Dean in excitement

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OUT OF THE ENEMY'S HANDS.

"EBEN and I will hide and leave you to receive them alone," said Rawson, rising hastily.

"But——" expostulated Dean in considerable alarm.

"Don't be afeared, lad. They shan't do you any harm. We want a little fun, that's all. We shall be close at hand."

The two darted behind a tree, leaving Dean reclining on the turf.

Kirby and Dan approached, engaged apparently in earnest conversation. They were close upon Dean before they recognized him. It is needless to say that their amazement was profound.

"Look there, Dan!" said Kirby, stopping short.

"There's the kid!"

"Well, I'm beat!" ejaculated Dan.

"How on earth can he have escaped? If he

got away without Pompey's knowledge he's about the smartest youngster I ever came across. I will take care it shan't happen again."

Striding forward, Kirby confronted Dean with a stern face.

Dean, by way of carrying out the deception, started and assumed a look of terror.

"What does all this mean, boy?" demanded Kirby.

'What does what mean?" asked Dean in apparent perplexity.

"How came you here? You know well enough what I mean."

"I walked," answered Dean demurely.

"Of course you did! How did you get out of the place where I put you?"

"I went out at the back door."

Kirby turned to Dan in alarm.

"Was it unlocked?" he asked, resuming his examination of the boy.

"Yes; if it hadn't been I couldn't have got out."

"Where is Pompey—the negro? What did you do to him?" asked Kirby suspiciously.

"He fell asleep after dinner."

"And I suppose you took the key from him in his sleep," said Kirby, rather as a statement than an inquiry.

Dean made no reply, and Peter Kirby took this as an admission that he was right.

"That must be the way, Dan," he said, turning to his companion. "It's lucky we met our young friend here, or we might have been deprived of his society."

Dean looked depressed, and Kirby was deceived by his manner.

"I suppose you know what's going to happen?" he said, addressing himself to Dean.

"No."

"Well, you'll soon know. You're going back to keep company with Pompey. He is very lonesome there in the cave, and he will be brightened up by having a boy as company."

"Oh, Mr. Kirby, please let me go on my way!" pleaded Dean.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, but it can't be done. Sit down, Dan. We've got a long walk before us, and we will rest a while."

The two men seated themselves one on each side of Dean, occupying the exact places recently vacated by the two miners. Kirby had been angry at first with Dean, but the exultation he felt at recovering him abated his wrath and made him good-natured. He felt like the cat who has the mouse securely in his power.

"Oho!" he laughed, "this is a good joke! This foolish lad really supposed that he had bidden us good-by. Didn't you, lad?"

"Yes; I never expected to see you again."

Kirby laughed again.

"My lad," he said, "you are not yet smart enough to circumvent Peter Kirby. You'll have to be several years older at least."

"Mr. Kirby," said Dean, earnestly, "will you tell me why you want to keep me a prisoner?"

"Suppose I say that I like your society?"

"I shouldn't believe you."

"You are a sharp one, youngster. That isn't the only reason."

"So I thought. What is the reason, then?"

"You know too much and suspect too much, boy. You're a pesky young spy. We don't propose to leave you at liberty to injure us."

"Was that why Squire Bates arranged for you to take me with you?" asked Dean, with a penetrating look.

"What motive could he have except to help you to a position?" answered Kirby, evasively.

"I don't know," answered Dean, emphasizing the last word.

"But you suspect something. Is that it?"

Dean nodded.

"Boy, you are too candid for your own good. It is clear that you are too sharp to be kept at liberty."

"Do you mean to take me back to the cave?"

"Yes."

"Why not let me travel with you instead? I should prefer it to such a gloomy prison."

"No doubt you would, but, as it happens, I am not bound to respect or consult your wishes. No doubt you think you would have a better chance to escape if I let you go with me."

"Yes," answered Dean demurely.

"So I thought, and that is the very reason I can't gratify you. I can't be bothered with a boy I must constantly watch, though, for that matter, if you played me false again," he added sternly, "I shouldn't scruple to put a bullet through your head."

He looked fiercely at Dean as if he meant it. Dean had no doubt that nothing but a fear of the consequences would deter him from the desperate act he hinted at, and he rejoiced more than ever that he had two stalwart friends so near at hand.

There was a little more conversation between Kirby and Dan, and then Kirby rose to his feet.

"Well, boy," he said abruptly, "it is time for us to be going."

"Go if you like, Mr. Kirby!" said Dean quietly. "I prefer to remain where I am."

"What, boy?" exclaimed Kirby angrily, "do you mean to defy us?"

"I mean, Mr. Kirby, that you have no right to interfere with me, or to deprive me of my freedom."

"No right, have I?" inquired Kirby in a sarcastic tone.

"That is what I said."

"Then, boy, you'd better not have said it. You won't fare any better for it, I can tell you that. Come, get up, and at once!"

He leaned over, and grasping Dean by the collar pulled him roughly to his feet.

The next moment, he thought he had been struck by lightning. He received a blow on the side of his head that stretched him full length on the ground.

When he rose, vaguely wondering what had happened, he confronted not the boy he had assaulted, but a strong, athletic man, with a powerful frame, and a stern, resolute eye.

This was Rawson, but he was not alone. Standing between Dean and Dan was another man, younger, but looking quite as powerful, Eben Jones, of Connecticut.

"What do you mean by this outrage?" demanded Kirby, with a baffled look, gnawing his nether lip in abortive wrath.

"That's a question for me to ask, stranger," re-

torted Rawson coolly. "What do you mean by assaulting this boy?"

"What do I mean? He is my servant, who has deserted and deceived me."

"Is this true, lad?"

"No, it isn't. I came West with this man, as a secretary, not knowing his character. I found out that he was a thief and then I left him."

"You shall answer for this, boy!" said Kirby, almost frothing at the mouth. "How dare you insult me?"

"The boy is telling the truth. I make no doubt, if you call that insulting you," said Rawson. "He tells us you shut him up in a cave."

"Yes, and I'll do it again."

"Will you indeed? You are at liberty to try."

"What have you got to do with the boy, any way?"

"A good deal. We have just admitted him as a partner in our mining firm. You'll find us in Gilpin County if you want to call, though on the whole I wouldn't advise it, as we miners make short shrift of such fellows as you are."

"The boy must come with us!" said Kirby, doggedly, unwilling to own himself beaten.

"I've got something to say to that, stranger, and

it's quickly said. Make yourselves scarce both of you, or you'll never know what hit you."

He pulled from his girdle a six shooter, and pointed it at Kirby.

The latter needed no second hint. He and Dan turned and walked away, muttering some ugly threats to which the two miners paid no heed.

"Now, lad, we'll have some supper," said Rawson," and look out for a good place to pass the night. I can't say much for your friends. They're about as ugly-looking knaves as I ever saw."

"I agree with you," said Dean, heartily. "I hope I shall never see them again."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SIX MONTHS AMONG THE MINES.

Six months later among the hills in Gilpin County we find three old acquaintances. They are Ben Rawson, Ebenezer Jones, and Dean Dunham. Dean has grown taller and there is a healthy brown hue on his cheeks. His eyes are bright, and his look is cheerful.

The three are sitting in front of a miner's cabin, resting after the fatigues of the day.

"Have a pipe, Dean?" asks Rawson.

"No, Ben; you know I don't smoke."

"You're right, lad, no doubt, but I couldn't get along without it. Do you know, boys, it is just six months to-day since we came here, after our brief interview with Dean's friends. By the way, what are their names?"

"Peter Kirby and Dan—I don't know his last name."

"I wonder what has become of them. It is easy to tell what will befall them at last."

"I hope I shall never set eyes on them again," said Dean, fervently.

"Well, I won't just say that; I might like to meet them if they were about to receive their deserts."

"Do you know how we stand, Rawson?" asked Eben Jones, taking the pipe from his mouth.

"I was just figuring up, Eben, this afternoon, since you have made me treasurer. There's a little over three thousand dollars in the common fund."

"A thousand dollars apiece."

"Precisely. It isn't a bad showing, is it? What do you say to that, Dean? How old are you?"

"Sixteen, but I am nearer seventeen."

"There are not many boys of your age who are worth a thousand dollars."

"I owe it to your kindness, Ben—yours and Eben's."

"I don't admit that, Dean. You have worked hard for it."

"But then I am only a boy, and yet you admit me to an equal partnership."

"And we're glad to do it, Dean," said Rawson, warmly. "Isn't that so, Eben?"

"You're talkin' for us both, Ben. The kid's been a great deal of company for us."

"Besides, Dean, Eben and I have got ten thousand dollars between us in a bank in Denver, unless the bank's busted, which I haven't heard of. I say, Eben, old chap, I feel rich!"

"I feel rich enough to go home," said Eben, after a thoughtful pause. "Would you mind if I did, Ben?"

"I should mind so much, Eben, that I should probably go along too."

"But that would be leaving Dean alone," objected Eben.

"Perhaps he would like to make a trip East also."

"Yes, I would," said Dean. "It's a long time since I've heard from my uncle and aunt. I think my last letter couldn't have reached them."

"There's one thing in the way," observed Rawson. "Our claims are valuable—more so than six months ago. If we leave 'em some one will take possession, and that'll be an end of our ownership."

"Sell 'em," said Eben, concisely."

"That will take time."

"I'll stay till it's done. I'm not going to give 'em away."

"Trust a Connecticut Yankee for that," said Rawson, laughing. "Well, to-morrow, then, we'll let our neighbors know that our claims are for sale."

Dean and his two friends retired at an early hour.

They usually became fatigued by the labors of the day, and did not require to court slumber long. They rose early, and took their breakfast at a restaurant near by. Before this was opened, they took turns at cooking breakfast themselves, but were glad to delegate that duty to some one else.

Dean, as the best penman, prepared the sign,

THESE CLAIMS FOR SALE.

rather fortunately, as Rawson was weak not only in writing but in spelling, and would have been very likely to write "Theas clames fer sail," without a thought that he had committed an error.

About nine o'clock on the second morning, a small man, dressed in a drab suit, walked leisurely up to Rawson, and remarked: "I understand that you wish to sell these claims."

"Exactly, if we can get a fair price.

"By we you mean——?"

"Myself, Mr. Jones, and the boy. We are partners. Where might you be from, friend?"

"I have an office in Denver. I am commissioned by a Philadelphia syndicate to buy some mining property, which will be worked with the help of improved machinery in a systematic manner."

"Then you will need more than we have to sell."

"I have secured the property on each side of you," said the agent composedly.

"What figures are you prepared to offer?" asked Rawson, with a look of business. "I don't want to be extortionate, but the claims are good ones, and we don't want to sacrifice them."

Then ensued a few minutes of bargaining, in which Dean took no part. Eben, though usually the most silent of the three, now developed the qualities characteristic of the New England Yankee, and it was due to him that the property was sold for six thousand dollars.

"I might have got more if I'd stood out a little longer," he said, half regretfully.

"We've done pretty well, though," said Rawson, complacently. "It's two thousand dollars apiece, say three, with what we've taken from it in the last six months. What do you say to that, lad? You'll go home with three thousand dollars."

"It doesn't seem possible, Ben. Why, Uncle Adin has been at work for forty years, and I don't believe the old place would fetch that."

"Money's easier to come at than in the old times. You'll astonish the old folks, lad."

"There'll be some others that'll be surprised," said Dean, smiling. "Squire Bates and Brandon among the rest."

"It's better than going home like a tramp. It's strange how much more people think of you when you're worth a little property. And I don't know but they're right. To get money, I mean honestly, a man must have some brains, and he must be willing to work. How much money do you think I had when I arrived here?"

"I don't know."

"Eighteen dollars. It was grit or brains with me, I can tell you. Eben here wasn't much better off."

"Not so well. I only had nine dollars."

"And now we've got eight thousand apiece. That'll make us comfortable for a while, eh, Eben?'

"For life, Rawson. I shall never come back here, but settle down at home, where people will call me a rich man."

"I can't answer for myself. How is it with you, Dean?"

"I shall come back," said Dean, positively. "There's very little chance for me in Waterford."

"Well, perhaps you are right. You'll have a fair start, and you're industrious and enterprising."

They stopped in Denver on their way home, and called at the office of the agent through whom their claims had been sold.

"Gentlemen," said the agent, "may I venture to give you some advice?"

"Certainly," said Rawson.

"The best thing you can do with a part of your money is to invest in real estate in this town."

Eben Jones shook his head.

"I'm going to buy a farm at home, and put the rest of the money in the savings bank," he said.

"How is it with you, Mr. Rawson?"

"No doubt your advice is good, but I want to let the folks at home see what I have brought in solid cash."

"And you?" continued the agent, turning to Dean.

"I will invest two thousand dollars in Denver lots," said Dean, promptly, "and take the rest home as a present to my uncle and aunt."

"You won't regret it. Denver is growing rapidly. I predict that the lots will double in your hands in a year."

Dean took a walk round the embryo city with the agent, and made a purchase of ten lots on Lawrence street, in accordance with his judgment.

"Now," said the agent, smiling, "I shall be sure to see you out here again."

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFFAIRS IN WATERFORD.

Leaving Dean in Denver, let us go back to Waterford, and see how matters stood in that quiet little village.

With Adin Dunham they did not go well. He had an attack of rheumatism during the winter which hindered him from working for several weeks, and so abridged his earnings. Both he and his wife missed Dean, whose lively and cheerful temperament enlivened the house. They were troubled too because months had passed since they had heard from him.

"I don't know what has happened to Dean," said Adin one Saturday evening, when he sat beside the kitchen fire with his wife. "Seems to me he'd write if he was in good health. I am afeared something has gone wrong with the boy."

"I hope not, father," said Sarah Dunham, pausing in her knitting.

"So do I, Sarah, but you must agree that it's strange he don't write."

"That's true, Adin. He was always a thoughtful, considerate boy. The house seems lonesome without him."

"So it does, Sarah. But if I only knew he was doin' well I wouldn't mind that. He may have got sick and——"

"Don't say such things, father," said Mrs. Dunham in a tremulous voice. "I can't bear to think anything's happened to the boy."

"But we must be prepared for the worst, if so be the worst has come."

"I am sure he is alive and well," said Sarah Dunham, who was of a more hopeful temperament than her husband.

"Then why don't he write?"

"To be sure, Adin. That's something I can't explain. But Dean's healthy, and he's a good boy, who wouldn't be likely to get into mischief. Instead of being prepared for the worst, suppose we hope for the best."

"Maybe you're right, Sarah. I try to be cheerful, but since I was robbed of that thousand dollars luck seems to have been against me. And the worst of it

is Sarah, I'm not getting younger. I shall be sixty-five next month."

"I'm not much behind you, Adin, as far as years go."

"I did hope that Dean would be in a position to help me when I got along in years. I mistrust I made a mistake when I let him go out West. If he'd stayed here, he might have been a good deal of help to us both."

"Still there didn't seem to be much of a prospect for the boy."

"He could have managed the farm when he got a little older."

"That is true, but it has never given you a living, Adin. You've had to depend upon your trade."

"He could have learned the same trade. A trade's a good thing for a boy to have to fall back upon."

"He may come back, and realize all your expectations, Adin. We mustn't despond till we have reason to."

"There's another thing that's worryin' me, Sarah—it's the mortgage. Next week six months' interest falls due—twenty-four dollars—and I haven't the money to meet it."

"Squire Bates won't push you, surely."

"I don't know. Once or twice lately when I met the squire he dropped a hint that he was short of

money. I didn't say much, but it struck me he had an object in sayin' what he did."

"It's the first time you haven't been ready with the interest, isn't it, Adin?"

"Yes, the very first time."

"Then perhaps he will overlook it this time. You'd better manage to see him about it."

"I'll do it the first time I see him."

That time came sooner than either of them thought.

Adin Dunham had scarcely completed his sentence when a knock was heard at the door (Adin had never so far fallen in with city customs as to introduce a door bell.)

Mrs. Dunham rose and opened the door.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Dunham," said the visitor, suavely.

"Good-evening, Squire Bates," said Sarah in surprise. "Won't you walk in?"

"Yes, thank you. Is your husband at home?"

"Oh, yes, he never goes out in the evening. Adin," she said, preceding the visitor, "here is Squire Bates, who has called to see you."

"I am glad to see you, squire," said the carpenter.

"Take a chair, and excuse my gettin' up. My old enemy, the rheumatism, has got hold of me, and I'm too stiff to move easy."

"Oh, you are quite excusable, Mr. Dunham. I am sorry to hear that you are so afflicted."

"It isn't altogether comfortable. Besides, it puts me behindhand. I've lost at least four weeks this winter from these rheumatic pains."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes, and as you can imagine, that is a serious thing to a poor man."

"I suppose so," assented the squire, coughing.

"I am glad you came in, squire, because I wanted to speak to you about the interest on that mortgage."

"It falls due next week," said Squire Bates, promptly.

"Just so, and I am sorry to say that for the first time I shall be unable to meet it."

"Indeed!" returned the squire, his voice stiffening. "That is very unfortunate!"

"So it is, squire, but I hope, as it is the first time, you will overlook it," said Adin Dunham, anxiously.

"My dear sir,' said the squire, "it is hardly necessary to say that I truly sympathize with you. You believe that, I hope?"

"I thought you would squire. I didn't believe you'd be hard on me."

"But—you misunderstand me a little, neighbor Dunham—I cannot be as considerate as I would like

to be. The fact is, I am *very* short of money, embarrassed in fact, and I depended on that payment. Perhaps you can borrow it? "

"There's no one in the village likely to accommodate me with a loan unless it's you, squire."

"And I am very short of cash. Indeed it would hardly do for me to lend you money to pay me, would it now?"

"I am afraid not," said the carpenter, ruefully.

"In fact, neighbor Dunham, I came here this evening to ask if you couldn't arrange to pay the mortgage."

"*Pay* the mortgage!" echoed Adin Dunham, with a blank look.

"Yes; I thought you might raise the money in some way."

"I wish you'd tell me where, Squire Bates. Eight hundred dollars! Why it's as big to me as the national debt! I did expect to pay off the mortgage with that thousand dollars, that I was so wickedly robbed of."

"Oh, ah, to be sure! It was a great pity that you were prevented from doing it."

"That robbery broke me down, Squire Bates. I believe it has made me five years older, though it happened less than a year ago. It makes me feel kind of rebellious at times to think that such a villain

as the man that robbed me should go unpunished."

"It isn't best to cry over spilt milk," said the squire who felt obviously uncomfortable under these allusions.

"I can't help thinkin' of it though, squire."

"To be sure, to be sure!"

"When it was gone, I hoped that Dean would be able to help me to pay up the mortgage some time."

"Have you heard from your nephew lately?"

"Not for months. Have you heard from the man he went out with?"

"Yes, I have heard several times."

"Does he say anything about Dean?"

"He says—but perhaps I had better not tell you. I don't want to distress you," and the squire hesitated.

"Say what you have to say. I can stand it."

"He says he discharged Dean for dishonesty."

"Dean dishonest! Why, squire, you must be jokin'."

"I am sorry to say, neighbor Dunham, that there is no joke about it. Mr. Kirby is not likely to be mistaken."

"I tell you, Squire Bates," said Adin Dunham angrily, "that my nephew Dean is as honest as I am myself. The man that charges him with dishonesty

is a liar! It's a word I don't often use, but I must use it this time."

"I agree with my husband," said Sarah Dunham, her mild blue eye sparkling with indignation. "Nothing would induce Dean to steal."

"Of course you are prejudiced in your nephew's favor," said the squire with a slight sneer. "It is very natural, but you can't expect others to agree with you. However, we will drop this subject. I am afraid Dean will never be able to help you. I used to think well of him, though my son Brandon didn't agree with me."

"What can your son Brandon know of Dean compared with mother and me, who have known the boy since his birth?" the carpenter rejoined warmly.

"I won't argue the question, neighbor Dunham. Indeed I feel for you in your disappointment. But to come back to business. You mustn't blame me if I foreclose the mortgage, as the law gives me a right to do. I wouldn't do it, I assure you, if circumstances did not make it imperative."

"Foreclose the mortgage!" repeated Adin in consternation.

"Yes, or I'll give you eight hundred dollars for the place over and above the mortgage."

"Only eight hundred dollars! Why, that would be robbery!"

"Think it over, neighbor Dunham, and don't decide hastily. You'll think differently, I am sure, when you have had time to consider it. I must bid you good-evening now, as I am in haste," and the squire rose quickly, and left the room, followed to the door mechanically and in silence by Sarah Dunham.

"Sarah," said the carpenter with grief-stricken countenance, "this is worse than all. It looks as if we were indeed forsaken by Providence."

"Hush, Adin! That is wicked. It looks hard, but the Lord may yet give us deliverance."

"I am afraid we shall end our days in the poor-house, Sarah," said the husband gloomily.

"It won't be this year or next, Adin. Eight hundred dollars will support us for two years, and then there is your work besides. Let us look on the bright side!"

But that was not easy for either of them. It seemed to Adin Dunham that his cup of bitterness was full

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW THE MYSTERY WAS SOLVED.

We return to Denver, where business required Dean and Ben Rawson to remain two or three days. Eben Jones was too impatient to reach home to bear them company, but started at once for Connecticut. Rawson and Dean secured a large room in the leading hotel, which they made their headquarters.

Denver was at that time far from being the handsome city it has since become. Society was mixed, and the visitors who were continually arriving and departing embraced all sorts and conditions of men. There was no small sprinkling of adventurers, both good and bad, and it was necessary for the traveler to be wary and prudent, lest he should fall a prey to those of the latter kind.

The second night our two friends retired late, having passed a busy and as it proved profitable day, for it was on that day Dean effected his purchase of lots already referred to.

"I feel fagged out, Dean," said Rawson, as he prepared for bed. "I have been working harder than I did at the mines."

"I am tired too, but I have passed a pleasant day," said Dean. "I think I would rather live here than at the mines."

"You can have your choice when you return, but for my part I like the mines. I prefer the freedom of the mining camp to the restraints of the city."

"There isn't much restraint that I can see."

"There will be. Five years hence Denver will be a compact city."

"In that case my lots will have risen in value."

"No doubt of it. You have made a good purchase. But what I was going to say is this. I am so dead tired that it would take an earthquake to wake me. Now, as you know, we have considerable money in the room, besides what we have outside. Suppose some thief entered our room in the night!"

"I wake easily," said Dean.

"That is lucky. There's a fellow with a hang-dog look rooms just opposite, whose appearance I don't like. I have caught him spying about and watching us closely. I think he is after our money."

"What is his appearance, Ben?"

"He has red hair and a red beard. There is something in his expression that looks familiar, but I can't

place him. I feel sure at any rate that he is a dangerous man."

"I haven't noticed him, Rawson."

"I have got it into my head somehow that he will try to enter our room when we are asleep."

"But the door is locked."

"If the man is a professional, he will be able to get in in spite of that. Now Dean, I want you to take my revolver and put it under your pillow, to use in case it should be necessary. Of course you will wake me also in case of a visit."

"Very well, Ben."

The two undressed and got into bed. There were two beds in the room, the smaller one being occupied by Dean. This was placed over against the window, while Rawson's was closer to the door, on the right.

Dean as well as Rawson, was tired, and soon fell asleep. But for some reason his sleep was troubled. He tossed about, and dreamed bad dreams. It might have been the conversation that had taken place between Rawson and himself, which shaped the dreams that disturbed him.

It seemed to him that a man had entered the room, and was rifling Rawson's pockets. The dream excited him so much that it awakened him, and none too soon, for there, bending over the chair on which Rawson had thrown his clothes, was the very man whom

his companion had described. The moonlight that flooded the room revea ed him clea .y, with his red hair and beard, just as he ad presented himself to Dean in his dreams.

Dean rose to a sitting postur., and quietly drew out the revolver f.om underneath hi pillow.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

The intruder started, and, turning quickly, fixed his eyes upon Dean. He didn't appear so much alarmed as angry at the interruption.

'Lie down, and keep still, if you know what's good for yourself, kid!" he said, in a menacing tone.

"And let you rob my friend? Not much!" said Dean, boldly. "Lay down those clothes!"

"When I get ready."

"I command you to lay them down!" said Dean, boldly.

"I'll wring your neck if you don't keep quiet," said the robber, quietly.

"Rawson!" cried Dean, raising his voice

"Confusion!" muttered the thief, as, dropping his booty, he took a step towards Dean's bed.

"Look out for yourself!" said Dean, in a tone of warning. "Come nearer, and I fire!"

Then for the first time the intruder noticed that the boy was armed. He drew back cautiously.

Just then Rawson asked sleepily, "What's the matter, Dean?"

"Wake up, Rawson, quick!" said Dean.

Ben Rawson opened his eyes, and took in the situation at once. He sprang from the bed, and placed himself between the thief and the door.

"Let me go!" exclaimed the intruder, as he made a dash forward, only to be seized by the powerful miner.

"Now let me know who you are, and whether you have taken anything," he said, resolutely. "Dean, let us have some light."

The thief struggled to escape, but in vain. His captor was stronger than himself. Dean lighted the gas, and both scrutinized the thief closely. Then a light flashed upon Dean.

"I know him in spite of his false hair and beard," he said. "It's Peter Kirby."

Rawson pulled off the disguise, and Kirby stood revealed.

"Yes, it's Kirby!" he said, doggedly. "What are you going to do with me?"

"Put you in the hands of the police," answered Rawson, coolly.

Kirby remained silent a moment, and then said: "I'll make it worth your while to let me go."

"How?" asked Rawson, briefly.

"That boy's uncle was robbed near a year since of a thousand dollars. I can tell him the name of the thief."

"Was it Squire Bates?" asked Dean, eagerly.

"Till my safety is assured I can tell nothing."

"Can you enable me to recover the money?"

"I can. I will be willing to make a statement, and swear to it before a magistrate."

"Is not Squire Bates the head of a gang of robbers?"

"I am not prepared to say. I will do what I agreed."

Rawson and Dean conferred together briefly, and decided to release Kirby on the terms proposed. But it was necessary to wait till morning, and they didn't dare to release him. They tied the villain hand and foot, and kept him in this condition till daylight. Then they took him before a magistrate, his statement was written out and sworn to, and they released him.

"I wouldn't have done this," said Kirby, "if Bates had treated me right; but he has been working against me, and I have sworn to get even."

Dean did not trouble himself about Kirby's motives, but he was overjoyed to think that through his means the mystery at Waterford had been solved at last, and his uncle would recover his property.

"Now I shall go home happy," he said to Rawson, "for I shall carry happiness to my good uncle and aunt."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ADIN DUNHAM'S TROUBLE.

ARRIVING in New York, Dean was tempted to buy a handsome suit of clothes, being fully able to spare the money. But on second thought he contented himself with purchasing a cheap, ready-made suit at one of the large clothing stores on the Bowery. He wanted to surprise his uncle and aunt. Besides, he wished to see what kind of a reception his old friends would give him if he appeared in shabby attire and apparent poverty. He could let them know the truth later on.

The evening before his arrival in Waterford Adin Dunham had another call from Squire Bates.

"Have you got my interest ready, neighbor Dunham?" he inquired.

"No, squire; I can give you a part of it, as I told you the other day."

"That will not answer," said Bates in an uncom-

promising tone. "I need the money at once. Some of my recent investments have paid me poorly, and though I would like to be considerate I cannot favor you."

"I will try to borrow the money. Perhaps Dean can let me have twenty dollars."

"Dean!" repeated Squire Bates with a sneer. "Do you think I can wait till you hear from him?"

"I have heard from him," answered the carpenter.

"You have heard from your nephew! Where is he?" Squire Bates asked in surprise.

"Here is his letter. It came to hand this morning."

Squire Bates took the proffered letter and read as follows:

NEW YORK, July 15.

DEAR UNCLE AND AUNT:—I have got so far on my way home from the West. I will remain here a day or two. Perhaps I can hear of a place, as I suppose there is nothing for me to do in Waterford. I think I shall be with you on Saturday.

Your affectionate nephew,

DEAN DUNHAM.

"He doesn't appear to have made his fortune," said the squire, handing back the letter to the carpenter.

"He doesn't say whether he has prospered or not."

"If he had he wouldn't be looking for a boy's position in New York."

"Very likely you're right, Squire Bates. It's something that he has been able to get home to his friends."

"Wait till you've seen him," said the Squire, significantly. "He will probably return home in rags."

"Even if he does he will be welcome," rejoined the carpenter warmly. "Even if he comes home without a penny, he won't lack for a welcome, will he, Sarah?"

"I should think not, Adin," said his wife in mild indignation.

"That is all very pretty and sentimental," said the Squire. "Perhaps you have a fatted calf to kill for the returning prodigal."

"Dean never was a prodigal," answered Adin Dunham. "If your friend had treated him well he might have had some money to return with. It wasn't a very creditable thing to throw the poor boy upon his own resources so far away from home."

"We spoke on that subject yesterday, and I distinctly told you that Mr. Kirby had a very good reason to discharge Dean. You didn't agree with

me. I suppose it is natural to stand up for your own. However, I will give you three days to make up the interest. That will carry us to Monday. But I shall also require you to pay the mortgage, or else accept my offer for the place. I will give you another week to do that."

Squire Bates went out of the room, leaving Adin and Sarah Dunham in some trouble of mind. There seemed to be no help for it. They must be dispossessed of what had been their home for many years.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CLOUDS ROLL BY.

Just before leaving Denver, Dean, in passing through Lawrence Street, came upon a boy, miserably clad, who held in his hand a few daily papers which he was trying to sell. There was something in the boy's face that looked familiar.

"Guy Gladstone!" he exclaimed in great surprise.

"Dean Dunham!" replied Guy, looking both pleased and ashamed.

"How came you here? I thought you were hunting Indians on the prairies."

Guy blushed scarlet.

"Don't say a word about it!" he replied. "I was a fool and I have suffered for my folly."

"Tell me about it."

"I got out of money and have nearly starved. I

have done anything I could to make a little money. I have blacked boots, set up pins in a bowling alley, and now I am selling papers."

"Why don't you go home?"

"I would if I had the money."

"Then you shall have the money. I start East to-morrow, and will take you along with me."

"Then you have prospered?" asked the wondering Guy.

"Yes, but not all the time. I have seen hard times, too. Mr. Kirby discharged me, and I lived some time by giving concerts on the harmonica."

"Really and truly!"

"Yes," answered Dean, laughing. "I don't wonder you are surprised. But here, give away your papers to that newsboy across the street and come to my hotel."

"But I haven't any money."

"I have enough for both."

Dean had the pleasure of restoring Guy to his family, who received him kindly. It is safe to say that he will never again go West in quest of Indians.

A little before noon on Saturday Dean reached Waterford, and walked home. On the way he met Brandon Bates.

"Halloa, so you're back!" said Brandon, eying him curiously.

"Yes, Brandon. Thank you for your warm welcome."

"I didn't mean to give you a warm welcome," said Brandon, ungraciously.

"I beg your pardon; I made a mistake."

"I suppose you came home without a cent."

"You're mistaken. I've got over a dollar in my pocket."

"What's a dollar?" sneered Brandon.

"It isn't much, to be sure."

"You won't hear very good news at your uncle's."

"Why? Is he sick—or my aunt?" asked Dean uneasily.

"No, but he can't pay the mortgage, and my father's going to take possession of the place."

"Oh, is that all?" said Dean, relieved.

"I should think it was enough."

"Oh, perhaps your father will think better of it, as I am at home now and can help Uncle Adin pay it off."

"What can you do?" asked Brandon, mockingly.

"That's the great question. However, I'm in a hurry to get home, and must leave you. You are kind to be so much interested in me, Brandon."

"I'm not interested in you at all," returned Brandon, tartly.

Dean laughed and passed on.

"That boy's as impudent as ever," soliloquized Brandon. "He'll feel differently on Monday."

In the joy of seeing Dean again his uncle and aunt lost sight for a time of their troubles, but after a while Adin Dunham said gravely, "It's well you came home as you did, Dean, for the old home is about to pass from me."

"How is that, Uncle Adin?"

"Squire Bates is going to foreclose the mortgage. He offers to buy the place and give me eight hundred dollars over and above what I owe him."

"Of course you declined?"

"It will do no good. I must yield to necessity."

"Squire Bates shall never have the place," said Dean, resolutely.

"Who will prevent it?"

"I will."

"But, Dean, what power have you? The squire is firmly resolved."

"So am I."

"But——"

"Uncle Adin, ask me no questions, but rest easy in the thought that you won't lose your home. Leave the matter in my hands. That is all you need to do."

"Sarah, what does the boy mean?"

"He means something, Adin. We may as well leave it in his hands as he asks."

"Very well, I don't know as he can do any harm —or good."

"That remains to be seen, uncle."

Dean went to church on Sunday, and received a warm welcome from nearly all the congregation, for he was popular with those of all ages. He wore a smiling, untroubled look which puzzled Squire Bates and Brandon.

"Does he know that I am going to foreclose the mortgage?" asked the squire of Brandon.

"Yes, for I told him."

"It seems strange that he should be so cheerful."

"He won't be—to-morrow."

"No, I apprehend not."

When Squire Bates called at the carpenter's modest home Dean opened the door, and invited him into the sitting-room, where the two found themselves alone.

"I want to see your uncle," said the squire.

"If it's about the mortgage, I will attend to that matter."

"You—a boy?"

"Yes, I feel competent to settle the matter."

"There is only one way of settling it, by paying the money."

"I propose to pay it as soon as——"

"Well, as soon as what?"

"As soon as you restore to my uncle, with interest, the thousand dollars you stole from him nearly a year since."

"What do you mean by this insolence?" demanded Squire Bates, springing to his feet and glaring at Dean.

"I mean," answered Dean, slowly, "that I have the sworn testimony of Peter Kirby, given me at Denver, implicating you in that robbery."

"Show it to me," said the squire, turning livid.

"Here is a copy. The original is in the hands of a New York lawyer."

Squire Bates took the paper in his trembling fingers, and read it deliberately.

"This is a lie!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"The matter can come before the courts if you wish it. My uncle recognized you at the time of the robbery, but no one would believe his testimony. Fortunately, it will be substantiated now."

"But this is the most utter absurdity. Does anybody believe that a man of my reputation would be implicated in a highway robbery?"

"They will find it equally hard to believe that

you are the captain of a band of robbers with headquarters in Colorado. I have been in the cave where your booty is concealed, and know what I am talking about."

After fifteen minutes more the squire capitulated, only making it a condition that Dean would keep secret the serious discoveries which he had made.

"I will do so, unless I am summoned to testify in court," said Dean.

"Leave me to explain matters to your uncle," said the squire.

Dean called the carpenter into the room.

"Mr. Dunham," said Squire Bates with his old suavity, "I have arranged matters satisfactorily with your nephew. He has recovered the large sum of which you were robbed a year ago, and paid the mortgage, or is prepared to do so. Dean, if you will accompany me to my office we will arrange this affair."

"But, who stole the money?" asked Adin Dunham, bewildered.

"I promised not to tell," said Dean. "Was I right?"

"Yes, yes, as long as you got the money back."

Dean received the mortgage back canceled, and something over two hundred dollars besides, which he placed in his uncle's hands. Adin Dunham looked

ten years younger, and his face was radiant. His joy was increased when Dean told him how he had prospered out West, and gave his aunt five hundred dollars, reserving for himself the remainder of the thousand which he had brought home.

Two months later Dean returned to Denver to find that his lots had considerably increased in value. Gradually he sold them off for twice what he paid, and entered business in the Queen City of Colorado.

Squire Bates soon removed from Waterford, and the villagers have heard nothing of him since. But Dean could tell them that his connection with the band of robbers was discovered, and that he is upon conviction serving a protracted term in a Western prison. What has become of Brandon or his mother is not known to the general public, but it is less than a year since Dean, while leaving the Denver post-office, was accosted by a shabbily dressed young man who asked for assistance.

"Are you not Brandon Bates?" asked Dean after a brief glance.

Brandon was about to hurry away, but Dean detained him. "Don't go," he said. "I am glad to help you," and he placed two gold eagles in the hands of the astonished Brandon.

"Come to me again if you are in need," said Dean in a friendly manner.

"Thank you! I didn't expect this from you," said Brandon. "I thought you would triumph over me."

"If I did I should show myself unworthy of the good fortune that has come to me. I wish you good luck."

That was the last Dean has seen of Brandon. Let us hope that he will deserve good luck, and attain it.

Adin Dunham still lives, happy in the companionship of his good wife, and the prosperity of his nephew. But there is one thing that puzzles him. He has never been able to solve THE WATERFORD MYSTERY.

THE END.

THE CREAM OF JUVENILE FICTION

THE BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

A Selection of the Best Books for Boys by the Most Popular Authors

THE titles in this splendid juvenile series have been selected with care, and as a result all the stories can be relied upon for their excellence. They are bright and sparkling; not over-burdened with lengthy descriptions, but brimful of adventure from the first page to the last—in fact they are just the kind of yarns that appeal strongly to the healthy boy who is fond of thrilling exploits and deeds of heroism. Among the authors whose names are included in the Boys' Own Library are Horatio Alger, Jr., Edward S. Ellis, James Otis, Capt. Ralph Bonehill, Burt L. Standish, Gilbert Patten and Frank H. Converse.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

All the books in this series are copyrighted, printed on good paper, large type, illustrated, printed wrappers, handsome cloth covers stamped in inks and gold—fifteen special cover designs.

140 Titles—Price, per Volume, 75 cents

For sale by all booksellers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price by the publisher,

DAVID McKAY,

610 SO. WASHINGTON SQUARE, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

HORATIO ALGER, Jr.

One of the best known and most popular writers. Good, clean, healthy stories for the American Boy.

Adventures of a Telegraph Boy
Dean Dunham
Erie Train Boy, The
Five Hundred Dollar Check
From Canal Boy to President
From Farm Boy to Senator
Mark Stanton
Ned Newton
New York Boy
Tom Brace
Tom Tracy
Walter Griffith
Young Acrobat

C. B. ASHLEY.

One of the best stories ever written on hunting, trapping and adventure in the West, after the Custer Massacre.

Gilbert, the Boy Trapper

ANNIE ASHMORE.

A splendid story, recording the adventures of a boy with smugglers.

Smuggler's Cave, The

CAPT. RALPH BONEHILL.

Capt. Bonehill is in the very front rank as an author of boys' stories. He writes also under the name of Stratemeyer and Winfield. These are two of his best works.

Neka, the Boy Conjurer
Tour of the Zero Club

WALTER F. BRUNS.

An excellent story of adventure in the celebrated Sunk Lands of Missouri and Kansas.

In the Sunk Lands

FRANK H. CONVERSE.

This writer has established a splendid reputation as a boys' author, and although his books usually command $1.25 per volume, we offer the following at a more popular price.

Gold of Flat Top Mountain
Happy-Go-Lucky Jack
Heir to a Million
In Search of An Unknown Race
In Southern Seas
Mystery of a Diamond
That Treasure
Voyage to the Gold Coast

HARRY COLLINGWOOD.

One of England's most successful writers of stories for boys. His best story is

Pirate Island

GEORGE H. COOMER.

Two books we highly recommend. One is a splendid story of adventure at sea, when American ships were in every port in the world, and the other tells of adventures while the first railway in the Andes Mountains was being built.

Boys in the Forecastle — **Old Man of the Mountain**

WILLIAM DALTON.

Three stories by one of the very greatest writers for boys. The stories deal with boys' adventures in India, China and Abyssinia. These books are strongly recommended for boys' reading, as they contain a large amount of historical information.

Tiger Prince — **War Tiger**

White Elephant

EDWARD S. ELLIS.

These books are considered the best works this well-known writer ever produced. No better reading for bright young Americans.

Arthur Helmuth
Check No. 2134
From Tent to White House
Perils of the Jungle
On the Trail of Geronimo
White Mustang

GEORGE MANVILLE FENN.

For the past fifty years Mr. Fenn has been writing books for boys and popular fiction. His books are justly popular throughout the English-speaking world. We publish the following select list of his boys' books, which we consider the best he ever wrote.

Commodore Junk
Dingo Boys
Golden Magnet
Grand Chaco
Weathercock

ENSIGN CLARKE FITCH, U. S. N.

A graduate of the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, and thoroughly familiar with all naval matters. Mr. Fitch has devoted himself to literature, and has written a series of books for boys that every

young American should read. His stories are full of very interesting information about the navy, training ships, etc.

Bound for Annapolis
Clif, the Naval Cadet
Cruise of the Training Ship
From Port to Port
Strange Cruise, A

WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

An author of world-wide popularity. Mr. Graydon is essentially a friend of young people, and we offer herewith ten of his best works, wherein he relates a great diversity of interesting adventures in various parts of the world, combined with accurate historical data.

Butcher of Cawnpore, The
Camp in the Snow, The
Campaigning with Braddock
Cryptogram, The
From Lake to Wilderness
In Barracks and Wigwam
In Fort and Prison
Jungles and Traitors
Rajah's Fortress, The
White King of Africa, The

LIEUT. FREDERICK GARRISON, U. S. A.

Every American boy takes a keen interest in the affairs of West Point. No more capable writer on this popular subject could be found than Lieut. Garrison, who vividly describes the life, adventures and unique incidents that have occurred in that great institution—in these famous West Point stories.

Off for West Point
Cadet's Honor, A
On Guard
West Point Treasure, The
West Point Rivals, The

HEADON HILL.

The hunt for gold has always been a popular subject for consideration, and Mr. Hill has added a splendid story on the subject in this romance of the Klondyke.

Spectre Gold

HENRY HARRISON LEWIS.

Mr. Lewis is a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and has written a great many books for boys. Among his best works are the following titles—the subjects include a vast series of adventures in all parts of the world. The historical data is correct, and they should be read by all boys, for the excellent information they contain.

Centreboard Jim
King of the Island
Midshipman Merrill
Ensign Merrill
Sword and Pen
Valley of Mystery. The
Yankee Boys in Japan

LIEUT. LIONEL LOUNSBERRY.

A series of books embracing many adventures under our famous naval commanders, and with our army during the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Founded on sound history, these books are written for boys, with the idea of combining pleasure with profit; to cutivate a fondness for study—especially of what has been accomplished by our army and navy.

Cadet Kit Carey
Captain Carey
Kit Carey's Protegé
Lieut. Carey's Luck
Out With Commodore Decatur
Randy, the Pilot
Tom Truxton's School Days
Tom Truxton's Ocean Trip
Treasure of the Golden Crater
Won at West Point

BROOKS McCORMICK.

Four splendid books of adventure on sea and land, by this well-known writer for boys.

Giant Islanders, The
How He Won
Nature's Young Nobleman
Rival Battalions

WALTER MORRIS.

This charming story contains thirty-two chapters of just the sort of school life that charms the boy readers.

Bob Porter at Lakeview Academy

STANLEY NORRIS.

Mr. Norris is without a rival as a writer of "Circus Stories" for boys. These four books are full of thrilling adventures, but good, wholsome reading for young Americans.

Phil, the Showman
Young Showman's Rivals, The
Young Showman's Pluck, The
Young Showman's Triumph

LIEUT. JAMES K. ORTON.

When a boy has read one of Lieut. Orton's books, it requires no urging to induce him to read the others. Not a dull page in any of them.

Beach Boy Joe
Last Chance Mine
Secret Chart, The
Tom Havens with the White Squadron

JAMES OTIS.

Mr. Otis is known by nearly every American boy, and needs no introduction here. The following copyrights are among his best:

Chased Through Norway
Inland Waterways
Unprovoked Mutiny
Wheeling for Fortune
Reuben Green's Adventures at Yale

GILBERT PATTEN.

Mr. Patten has had the distinction of having his books adopted by the U. S. Government for all naval libraries on board our war ships. While aiming to avoid the extravagant and sensational, the stories contain enough thrilling incidents to please the lad who loves action and adventure. In the Rockspur stories the description of their Baseball and Football Games and other contests with rival clubs and teams make very exciting and absorbing reading; and few boys with warm blood in their veins, having once begun the perusal of one of these books, will willingly lay it down till it is finished.

Boy Boomers
Boy Cattle King
Boy from the West
Don Kirke's Mine
Jud and Joe
Rockspur Nine, The
Rockspur Eleven, The
Rockspur Rivals, The

ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE.

Mr. Rathborne's stories for boys have the peculiar charm of dealing with localities and conditions with which he is thoroughly familiar. The scenes of these excellent stories are along the Florida coast and on the western prairies.

Canoe and Camp Fire
Paddling Under Palmettos
Rival Canoe Boys
Sunset Ranch
Chums of the Prairie
Young Range Riders
Gulf Cruisers
Shifting Winds

ARTHUR SEWELL.

An American story by an American author. It relates how a Yankee boy overcame many obstacles in school and out. Thoroughly interesting from start to finish.

Gay Dashleigh's Academy Days

CAPT. DAVID SOUTHWICK.

An exceptionally good story of frontier life among the Indians in the far West, during the early settlement period.

Jack Wheeler

The Famous Frank Merriwell Stories.

BURT L. STANDISH.

No modern series of tales for boys and youths has met with anything like the cordial reception and popularity accorded to the Frank Merriwell Stories. There must be a reason for this and there is. Frank Merriwell, as portrayed by the author, is a jolly whole-souled, honest, courageous American lad, who appeals to the hearts of the boys. He has no bad habits, and his manliness inculcates the idea that it is not necessary for a boy to indulge in petty vices to be a hero. Frank Merriwell's example is a shining light for every ambitious lad to follow. Six volumes now ready:

Frank Merriwell's School Days	Frank Merriwell's Trip West
Frank Merriwell's Chums	Frank Merriwell Down South
Frank Merriwell's Foes	Frank Merriwell's Bravery

VICTOR ST. CLAIR.

These books are full of good, clean adventure, thrilling enough to please the full-blooded wide-awake boy, yet containing nothing to which there can be any objection from those who are careful as to the kind of books they put into the hands of the young.

Cast Away in the Jungle	Little Snap, the Post Boy
For Home and Honor	Zig-Zag, the Boy Conjurer
From Switch to Lever	Zip, the Acrobat

MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

Good, healthy, strong books for the American lad. No more interesting books for the young appear on our lists.

Adventures of a Young Athlete	My Mysterious Fortune
Eric Dane	Tour of a Private Car
Guy Hammersley	Young Editor, The

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD.

One of the most popular authors of boys' books. He writes also under the name of Bonehill and Stratemeyer. Here are three of his best.

Mark Dale's Stage Venture	Young Bank Clerk, The
Young Bridge Tender, The	

DAVID McKAY, Publisher, Philadelphia.

GAYLE WINTERTON.

This very interesting story relates the trials and triumphs of a Young American Actor, including the solution of a very puzzling mystery.

Young Actor, The

ERNEST A. YOUNG.

This book is not a treatise on sports, as the title would indicate, but relates a series of thrilling adventures among boy campers in the woods of Maine.

Boats, Bats and Bicycles

DAVID McKAY, Publisher, Philadelphia.